Encounter

Non-Proliferation
Don Cook

Oxford Again
Max Beloff

Letter from Prague
François Bondy

Darkness of Reason
Iris Murdoch

Oxford and Frankness
Frank Kermode

Stendhal
Louis Kronenberger

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Washington Conversation
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Story
Olivia Manning

Beastly to the Germans?
Terence Prittie

Modesty Blaise
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edited by
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July 1966

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HAMISH HAMILTON

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Don Cook

The Art of Non-Proliferation

Letter from Geneva

"Certainly it seems now that nothing could have been more obvious to the people of the early twentieth century.... And as certainly they did not see it. They did not see it until the atomic bombs burst in their fumbling hands." H. G. WELLS (*1914*)

THE SITUATION HERE is one of sour pettiness, and it characterises East-West relations in general and Soviet-American relations in particular. This is continuously exposed and exhibited in the interminable Geneva debates over a "Treaty to Halt the Spread of Nuclear Weapons," known for short, as only experts can know it, as non-proliferation.

This dismal deterioration of atmosphere is all the more unfortunate because there is no "grand confrontation" going on in the world between the two super-powers which would account for it or justify it. There is the nasty and squalid war in South Viet Nam, but the Soviet Union and the United States are not "eyeball-to-eyeball" anywhere and they are not indulging in useless head-bashing or military threats and posturing of the kind that marked Berlin, Cuba and the fierce days of the Cold War. In fact, on the whole they are getting on with the business of competitive co-existence in a fairly peaceful way. Moreover, the Soviet Union has stated repeatedly and publicly in Geneva that not only is the Viet Nam war no obstacle to the conclusion of a non-proliferation treaty; indeed *because* of the Viet Nam war the Soviet Union says that it thinks such a treaty is "all the more desirable."

But this having been said, the language and style of the old inflexible diplomacy nevertheless goes right on, and with it all of that old Cold War niggardliness—sterile, futile, and sour. In Russia this is characterised by the wretched affair of Gerald Brooke, still languishing in a Siberian labour camp for taking with him to the Soviet Union a propaganda-filled photo album which had most probably been planted on him by a Russian double-agent in Britain.

Before that there was the tragic case of James Mott, the young American who strayed across the Norwegian-Russian frontier in the woods of the far north, cheerfully turned himself in to the Russian authorities, and in the end committed suicide or was killed in a fight with his Russian guards in a prison train on his way to serve a three-year jail sentence. The State Department responded to this with a bitter leaflet warning American tourists against visiting the Soviet Union. And then that ageing guardian of American liberties, John Edgar Hoover, managed to frighten President Johnson and the U.S. Congress out of ratifying a laboriously-negotiated consular treaty with Russia which would at least offer the possibility of preventing such tragedies as the Mott case. (But Hoover says the FBI has enough work to do without having to watch a lot of new Soviet consulates from coast-to-coast.)

In Geneva this pettiness and sourness takes the form of endless Russian attacks on West Germany, couched in the tired old language of Stalin, Khrushchev and company.

"The Federal Republic of Germany has

DON COOK *is now the Paris correspondent of the* Los Angeles Times *and his dispatches (mostly in the European edition of the* Herald Tribune*) have been widely read for twenty years. His book* Floodtide in Europe *(Putnam) was published last year.*

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embarked on a revision of the results of the war and the resurrection of the German *Reich*," ran one of these familiar scripts (they hardly change a word) from Andrei Roshchin who became the new chief Soviet disarmament negotiator last April.

> The Federal Government has delivered a note to other governments making a claim for changing the existing European frontiers. This document, advertised as being sort of "an act of good-will" demonstrates that the Federal Government intends to follow a revanchist course.... It is with this in view that a broad programme of militarisation of Western Germany which employs the largest military force in Western Europe has been embarked upon. European security should envisage the creation of conditions which would eliminate forever the possibility of a repeated German aggression. In this connection it is necessary to stress the peaceful policy of the German Democratic Republic....

This tedious kind of "our-Germans-are-better-than-your-Germans" nonsense usually has a dulling, dismaying effect on the other delegations who are making noble efforts to believe that they really are in Geneva to negotiate a treaty. One Western delegate, when he sees the propaganda machines being wheeled into action, makes a point of countering by conspicuously dozing off during the tirade. But surely there comes a time when no intelligent man can remain indifferent, or aloof, or asleep any longer.

Lord Chalfont, the chief British negotiator, who certainly shows forbearance above and beyond the call of duty, finally had enough by the time the talks recessed for a month in early May. He turned on the Russians and lashed out at their "single-minded, obsessive and vengeful campaign" against West Germany; their "myopic and doctrinaire refusal to see where the real danger lies"; and Russia's apparent determination "to regard a non-proliferation treaty as a measure directed almost exclusively against one country, the Federal Republic of Germany."

> If we cannot stop the spread of nuclear weapons, and stop it soon, we may find that all other programmes on disarmament are blocked, perhaps forever.

Chalfont is certainly right. The Russians do seem to be obsessed with stopping West Germany from getting any kind of "partial possession" or "partial control" over nuclear weapons, even though in fact the immediate danger of nuclear proliferation obviously lies elsewhere—India threatened by China, Israel versus Egypt, Sweden, to name four countries which could proceed fairly rapidly from peaceful to military nuclear production if they choose. Moreover, Chalfont and the other delegates in Geneva are becoming more and more depressed at the fact that "the last chance" to get the disarmament problem in hand seems to be slowly but steadily slipping away. It is increasingly obvious that if some way cannot be found to lift this relatively simple problem of a non-proliferation treaty out of its present sterile atmosphere, then it is going to be impossible to move on to more complicated matters such as a ban on underground nuclear testing.

THIS IS A PRACTICAL as well as a political problem. The present series of talks has been in progress, off and on, since March 1962, when this 17-nation United Nations committee first met to take over the work of the old 10-nation disarmament conference of the 1950s. The work of that group had been halted in 1960 by an abrupt Russian walk-out. In the enlarged committee which has been at it now for four years, nations such as Brazil, Burma, Ethiopia, Mexico and Nigeria clearly do not have any great technical interest or lively political role to play. They naturally enjoy the prestige of membership, but it costs money to maintain delegations in Geneva and it takes trained senior diplomatic personnel. Both are short among the smaller nations; and among the smaller powers patience with the larger powers is also beginning to run short.

Disarmament is a complicated technical subject, and no matter how frustrating or slow-moving the discussions might be, governments nevertheless have to keep good career men on the job. Delegates have to be steeped in all of the background and paper-work in order to advise and take decisions. It is not easy for small governments who badly need good people elsewhere to tie up men and money sitting in Geneva listening to Mr. Rashchin denounce the evil-eyed revanchists of West Germany and Mr. Foster of the United States wearily defending the NATO alliance and the virtues of a multilateral nuclear force.

Along the way in the last four years, these Geneva talks have produced (1) the all-important nuclear atmospheric Test Ban treaty and (2) the "Hot Line" communications link between Washington and Moscow. But the hopes which these agreements brought to

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Geneva are fading fast and the momentum is running down. If things do not begin to look appreciably brighter by the time this round of talks terminates (at the end of the summer) for a report back to the annual UN General Assembly in New York, then it is highly doubtful if there will be enough votes or enthusiasm in the UN to send the delegates back for another try.

The situation is all the more dispiriting because the longer the argument goes on over whether or not West Germany is to be allowed to come into some form of ownership of "nuclear hardware" under a non-proliferation treaty, the more obvious it becomes that this is really a "non-problem." The United States is trying with rather pathetic ingenuity to keep the door open for some future nuclear weapons-sharing arrangement with West Germany and the Russians are trying just as hard to slam it shut and lock it tight. In fact, they are engaged in a pointless and unreal debate about something which is now totally unlikely ever to happen anyway.

IT IS A SIMPLE political fact of life in Western Europe today that the whole idea of any kind of nuclear hardware-sharing arrangement between the U.S.A. and West Germany is now far too explosive and divisive in the NATO alliance ever to be attempted at all. Quite probably there are many American and West German policy-makers who would not agree with that statement—but if they try to proceed down the road to a "hardware solution" on nuclear weapons they will quickly find out.

In the first place, it is quite wrong to assume that because President Charles de Gaulle has now removed France from military participation in NATO, the "biggest obstacle" which stood in the way of the old multilateral nuclear force proposal in 1963–4 is gone. France's capacity for strong reaction against Germany is as operative as ever and in fact may well be even stronger now that she is no longer bound by NATO conviviality. In 1964, De Gaulle came very close to threatening an abrogation of the Franco-German treaty if West Germany were to join the *M.L.F.* He would certainly react violently again today if it began to look as if the United States were about to enter into some "part-ownership-and-control" arrangements to give West Germany a share in nuclear hardware. Any number of moves would have to be reckoned with: final French denunciation of the NATO Treaty or of the Franco-German Treaty of Friendship; a new Franco-Soviet treaty; French recognition of East Germany; a French pull-out from Berlin. These would be enormous diplomatic and political risks for the West German government and the U.S. government to take, and General de Gaulle's supposed new "freedom of action" outside NATO makes the risks greater rather than less.

As for the other NATO countries, it is perfectly clear (or, at least, ought to be clear in Washington by now) that Harold Wilson and the British Labour Government have been fighting a long rear-guard delaying action against the idea of a "hardware solution" and have put an absolute priority on getting a non-proliferation treaty. Now that everyone recognises that the *M.L.F.* is dead, the British would like it also recognised that even their own less complicated "Allied Nuclear Force" plan (*A.N.F.*) is now awaiting respectable burial.

Italy which always makes interested noises when the subject of nuclear sharing comes up is nevertheless governed by a left-centre coalition in which the Nenni Socialists have been the key to a successful partnership. The Nenni Socialists persuaded themselves to join a pro-NATO government on the basis of the theory that NATO is now not so much a military alliance as it is an essential element of stability in Europe. This would seem to be a sensible and logical line for the Italian government to take; but does Washington or Bonn really expect that given this attitude, the Nenni Socialists would ever agree to a nuclear weapons-sharing scheme which would be opposed violently by France and Russia? It would be the end of Italy's left-centre coalition.

The Norwegians and the Danes have been strongly against nuclear weapons-sharing for West Germany from the start. The Belgians, despite Paul-Henri Spaak's personal feelings, declined to support the *M.L.F.* scheme. Holland went along without enthusiasm. Greece and Turkey were both in on the original *M.L.F.*, and then Turkey pulled out.

In short, the indifference and inertia in NATO towards nuclear weapons-sharing is complete, and any purely German-American scheme would be politically disastrous for the alliance. Nevertheless, the West Germans and the Americans solemnly go on proclaiming that "the option must be kept open for Germany." Hence the deadlock in Geneva.

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To KEEP THE OPTION OPEN, the United States has tabled a draft of a nuclear non-proliferation treaty which reads as if it had been written with a ball-point corkscrew. Its key wording is as follows:

> Each of the nuclear-weapon states party to this treaty undertakes . . . not to transfer nuclear weapons into the national control of any non-nuclear-weapon state or into the control of any association of non-nuclear weapon states . . . not to take any other action which would cause an increase in the total number of states and associations of states having control of nuclear weapons.

The draft goes on to define "control" as meaning the "right or ability to fire nuclear weapons without the concurrent decision of an existing nuclear-weapon state."

The effect of this treaty draft is to allow a state possessing nuclear weapons to join an "association of non-nuclear-weapon states" which would then become the joint owners of nuclear weapons with the ultimate control over the firing of the weapons remaining in the hands of the "nuclear weapon state." In the sacred name of non-proliferation, there would thus be no increase in the total number of so-called "Nuclear Entities" in the world. But while the United States is having its *M.L.F.* with Germany, France could have an *M.L.F.* with Israel—China could have an *M.L.F.* with Indonesia or North Viet Nam—Russia could have an *M.L.F.* with Poland—and if that would not constitute "proliferation of nuclear weapons" then the multi-language interpreting system in Geneva has totally broken down. It seems to me pointless if not downright silly for the Americans to have to argue solemnly that they would of course expect the "control arrangements" in any such proliferation of little *M.L.F.*s around the world to be absolutely a tight and sophisticated as the arrangements which have been envisaged in nuclear weapons-sharing schemes between Washington and Bonn. Even partial ownership implies the right to use or seek to use. That is why the Russians behave almost pathologically on this question with regard to the Germans.

BUT WHILE THE United States devotes ingenious language to a treaty draft which will keep the door open for an eventuality which is wholly unlikely ever to happen, the Soviet Union draft-treaty is just as unrealistic in the opposite direction—for it seeks to dictate what NATO can do or cannot do in organising its nuclear defence.

> Parties to the treaty possessing nuclear weapons, [says the Soviet draft] undertake not to transfer such weapons in any form—directly or indirectly, through third states or groups of states—to the ownership or control of states or groups of states not possessing nuclear weapons, and not to accord to such states or groups of states the right to participate in the ownership, control or use of nuclear weapons. The said parties to the treaty shall not transfer nuclear weapons or control over them or over their emplacement and use, to units of the armed forces or military personnel of states not possessing nuclear weapons, even if such units or personnel are under the command of a military alliance.

Taken at its full, literal impact, this language would give the Russians the right to demand the removal of all American nuclear warheads from Europe; and not even the Danes or Norwegians find that acceptable. The Soviet draft is nothing more nor less than an effort to break up NATO's internal defence arrangements under the guise of preventing West Germany from coming into partial ownership of nuclear weapons. The Soviet negotiating position is no more realistic than the American-German position.

What, then, are the chances of a non-proliferation agreement? Can the unreal debate over a non-problem be suspended and a solution found?

THE SIMPLE PRAGMATIC solution would be for both sides to step back and *ignore* the "German syndrome." If Russia's chief diplomatic aim in Geneva is to block the West Germans from obtaining nuclear hardware, then the best way they could achieve it would be to sign a non-proliferation treaty in almost any wording. Any kind of treaty will obviously serve to reinforce the present inertia and opposition in NATO which already makes nuclear hardware-sharing a practical impossibility. Any kind of treaty will tend to stabilise the existing situation and improve the East-West atmosphere. It would become a self-denying ordinance against any further steps towards weapons-sharing in NATO no matter what the formal terms.

Can the Russians be persuaded to give up their attempts to get treaty language which would enable them to intervene in the internal defence arrangements of the NATO alliance? The West

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is not so foolish as to waste time trying to interfere in Warsaw Pact arrangements, and NATO will certainly remain united in rejecting such attempts by Russia. At the same time, can the Americans be persuaded to abandon their tortuous language involving "associations of non-nuclear-weapon states" by which they are trying to write the German option into the treaty?

Is it inconceivable that the two sides step back and settle on very simple straightforward uncomplicated language? It could be a clause as simple as this:

> Parties to the treaty possessing nuclear weapons undertake not to transfer such weapons into the national ownership or control of states or groups of states not possessing nuclear weapons.

Such a formulation merely records the present situation and does not attempt either to forecast or foreclose the future. Should the circumstances arise in Germany, in NATO, or in the general state of East-West relations in which some "hardware solution" seems necessary and desirable, the option is still there.

It is there first of all because such treaty language would ban the "national ownership and control" but it does not ban partial ownership in which control would continue to rest with the nuclear power providing the weapons. In any case, the "German option" is kept open by a "national interest" clause which appears in parallel form in both the Soviet and American drafts. In the Russian draft it reads:

> Each party shall in exercising its national sovereignty have the right to withdraw from the treaty if it decides that extraordinary events relating to the subject matter of this treaty have jeopardised the supreme interests of its country. It shall give notice of such a withdrawal to all other parties to the treaty three months in advance.

The Russians would be free to protect their position under this clause. If they felt so compelled, they simply could state after signing the treaty that if any mixed-ownership weapons-sharing scheme were to be advanced in NATO, then the Soviet Union would consider this grounds for denouncing the treaty.

Above all, the importance of a nuclear non-proliferation treaty clearly does not at all lie in its terms or language—but in the simple fact that there is at long last a political agreement between the two super-powers. The terms are superfluous to the fact of agreement. Nor does it matter a great deal that China and France will not sign; that India, Israel and Egypt will all hesitate; that West Germany will not want to have its name on a document which East Germany also signs; that the treaty has no policing machinery, no sanctions, no security clauses or guarantees. All these arguments and questions fade into insignificance alongside the historic fact that Russia and the United States would have managed to sign a piece of paper which simply and sanely agrees to go on doing what they are doing anyway, *i.e.* refusing to turn their nuclear weapons over to anybody else.

MEANWHILE, THE SO-CALLED "NATO McNamara Committee" on nuclear plans and strategy goes on, with West German membership. Already its work has demonstrated one salient fact—that even if the *M.L.F.* were in existence today, there would still have to be a consultative committee of this kind to work out plans and strategy for the use of weapons and the whole process of decision-making. The Russians can do nothing about the McNamara committee, and no matter how much they vilify it in *Izvestia* and at the conference table in Geneva, they have to accept the fact that it is a purely internal NATO arrangement which is going to go right on. It does *not* involve any proliferation of nuclear weapons and it is no bar to negotiating a treaty or an excuse for not signing such a treaty. Proliferation of committees is far better than proliferation of weapons.

It is a moot question, except to the committed theologians, how truly important and vital this "nuclear option" really is for West Germany. Generally speaking, the people who argue most emotionally and fervently about the importance of Germany's option are Americans and not Germans. Of course key officials and ministers of the Bonn Government state repeatedly that "the option must be kept open." But having said these fairly *pro forma* lines, they have not been seen rushing to the platforms or into print to argue the case with much passion or conviction.

In the end, the "German syndrome" seems to reduce itself to the fact that it would cause infinite complications and probably even great political harm if West Germany were ever to come into partial ownership of nuclear weapons —but it would cause reverse complications and political troubles if West Germany were flatly told that she could never have nuclear weapons.

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Therefore, to ignore doing either is to ensure that nothing will happen—and this, I submit, is no bad solution. It is a "solution" which will become more and more attractive to German politicians and diplomats as they become increasingly involved with the politics of reunification. It is a "solution," moreover, which if it could be translated into a non-proliferation treaty would help to lift East-West relations out of the sour pettiness which steadily worsens; and this new turn would be reflected in the atmosphere of the German reunification problem.

But the longer the present pettiness goes on, the more it begins to infuse diplomats and legislators and civil servants and government ministers, and the more difficult it will be to check and control. Already its effect can be seen on the Soviet-American consular treaty and, again, in the rebuff which President Johnson received from the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee over his proposal to increase U.S. trade with the Eastern bloc.

Ahead of both the United States and the Soviet Union, apparently, lies the terrible multi-billion dollar decision as to whether to begin building and deploying vast Anti-Ballistic Missile defence systems. Can either side start such a programme without the other side finding out about it very rapidly? And when one side starts, won't the other feel compelled to follow? So the upward spiral goes.

At Geneva there is still a chance to renew the contract of mutual self-interest which began with the Test Ban treaty. It is not a problem of language. It is not a problem of negotiation. It is only a problem of common sense and political will.

Or as Rhedi wrote to Usbek in Paris in Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* (1721), "You know that since the invention of gunpowder, there is no impregnable city, which is to say, Usbek, that there is no asylum on earth against violence and injustice. I am ever trembling lest someone should fall upon some secret that makes possible a shortened path to the destruction of men, peoples, and entire nations. . . ."

And Usbek replied to Rhedi in Venice, "You fear, you say, that some crueller method of destruction than that now used will be invented. No. If a fatal invention were to be made, it would soon be outlawed by international law, and unanimous agreement among nations would bury the discovery. Princes have no interest in conquering by such means. . . ."

A Bright Day

At times I see it, present
  As a bright day, or a hill,
The only way of saying something
Luminously as possible.

Not the accumulated richness
  Of an old historical language—
That musk-deep odour!
  But a slow exactness

Which recreates experience
  By ritualising its details—
Colour of curtain, width
  Of table, till all

Take on a witch-bright glow
  And even the clock on the mantel
Moves its hands in a fierce delight
  Of so, and so, and so.

John Montague

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Olivia Manning

Innocent Pleasures

IT WAS the tram-car in the Transport Museum that reconstituted Mr. Limestone. Before that he had been no more than a little dust buried beneath Emily's rejected and done-for memories of Camber. She had not given him a thought for years. He was probably dead. There might be no one left in Camber who had even heard of him; yet, suddenly, there he was in her mind, as alive as he had ever been, which was not saying much.

When she went closer to read the tram-car's particulars, she was startled, for it was one of Camber's own old tram-cars. There had never been many of them and she must have ridden in this one dozens of times. It had probably taken her again and again to Mr. Limestone's door and now, by some afflatus of its own, it had conjured up the man himself. It had said across the floor: "Limestone," yet she would not have recognised it as a Camber tram-car.

Giving herself distance as though in front of a painting, she viewed the car from the front. She was struck by its elegance. With that tall, narrow prow it might have been built, like a clipper, for speed; instead, it had been a mere public conveyance, scarcely able to get underway before once more grinding to a halt.

The line had run from the north of Camber to the Pier. The tram simply went straight down and back again. She and Edward had called it "the brown tram" to distinguish it from the green, open-topped tram that went in to the country; but now she saw it was not brown at all; it was maroon. The maroon outer casing was beautifully bright. Inside, the slatted honey-coloured seats were polished like satin, the brass-work shone. In its present shape, it was as much a museum piece as some hand-made engine of Victorian times. It certainly had not looked like this when she and Edward, a critical, impatient pair, had watched it come swinging and pinging through the dusty sunlight, or ploughing, like some lighted bathysphere, the sea-blue murk of a winter's afternoon.

Mr. Limestone lived half-way between the termini. The Worples were in north Camber, which Emily condemned as "a nothing place," and when the tram left her at Mr. Limestone's door, and went on to the sea and pier and the promenade where the band played on Sundays, she wished she were going with it.

The Limestones' house, a carmine semi-detached with yellow brickwork, was finer than the Worples' house, at least on the outside. It had a front garden where a wooden palette stood on an easel and told passers-by that Mr. Limestone was a dentist. Because of the palette there was a general belief that Mr. Limestone was "artistic." Nothing was said about his being a children's dentist but the patients—and these were few enough—all seemed to be children.

There was a dentist in north Camber but someone had told Mrs. Worple that Mr. Limestone was good with children. In those early days, when she had to accompany her children, she took the long tram journey in the belief that he, and he alone, could "manage" them. She boasted that she could not manage them herself, a fact for which

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she apportioned blame equally between them and their father. Of course there had been uproar before she could persuade them to a first visit. She described the awful remorse suffered by grown-ups who neglected their teeth in childhood: "You wouldn't like false teeth, would you?" she demanded. "Why not?" said Edward: "False teeth don't ache." When nothing else would move them, she promised them two bars of chocolate apiece. As most occasions began with threats and ended with chocolate bars, the years ahead were filled with visits to Mr. Limestone.

Mr. Limestone had another virtue: he was cheap. It took him months, years even, to concoct his account, and then several items would be forgotten. But small though his accounts were, and overdue, they led to painful discussions about money and Mrs. Worple would say that Emily and Edward did not appreciate the sacrifices that were being made for them.

"In my young day," she said, "Children looked up to their parents. They were grateful for being alive."

"I bet," said Edward, bringing from Mrs. Worple the bitter comment:

"Unruly children!"

THIS RIPOSTE, a favourite of hers, dated back to the time when a Mr. Greening, a business acquaintance of Mr. Worple, had called on the Worples at tea-time and been invited to join them at the table. He was a stout, pompous man who did most of the talking, and while he talked his moustache waggled in a manner that gripped the attention of the children. At first they watched, scarcely believing, then dire amusement set in. They began to laugh until, losing control, their laughter became wild. When Mrs. Worple frowned at them, they exploded helplessly and rolled round and round in their chairs. It slowly came to Mr. Greening that he, of all people, was the cause of this shocking exhibition. He looked at Mr. Worple, but Mr. Worple had a weakness. It was a serious weakness of a sort that had been unknown in fathers when Mrs. Worple was young. Whenever Emily and Edward started to laugh, Mr. Worple had to laugh, too.

He did his best to admonish them: "Now, Emily;" he said, "Now, Edward." But he was already beginning to shake and his face was red and his eyes damp with the effort to suppress his laughter.

Emily's voice rose in a shriek: "Listen to daddy trying to talk like mummy," and both children collapsed on the table, weeping in an anguish of mirth.

It was then that Mr. Greening, observing them with disgust, said "Unruly children!" and Mrs. Worple was deeply impressed. Although he never came back to the Worples' house, she remembered him as a champion against her unsatisfactory husband and intolerable children. If he had not made his historic indictment, she might never have realised the extent of her own grievance. When things were at their worst—which usually meant, when some *jeu d'esprit* thrown off by one of them had thrown both into hysterics—she would say, as though the phrase might quell them: "Unruly children!"

In view of this, it was all the more remarkable that Mr. Limestone, with nothing but his professional mystery, could manage them. He did not look like a manager. Mrs. Worple gave him one look and began: "I'm afraid you'll find them very difficult. I don't know why they behave so badly. I'm sure they couldn't have a better home. . . ."

Mr. Limestone murmured "Oh, yes?" without interest, and the children felt he was on their side.

He was so small that they outgrew him in no time. He was pale, with sandy hair and a nose that looked overlarge because it was almost the whole of his face. His cheeks, brow and chin seemed to have receded, leaving the nose in possession. His shoulders, too, had shrunk so his white jackets were all too big for him and his collar always stood out at the back as though a hand had seized him by the scruff. He was gentle, but never smiled. Emily and Edward, used to their father's quick response, sometimes tried to entertain Mr. Limestone but it meant nothing to him. Whether he heard them or not, he

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remained melancholy, perhaps intent on more serious things.

When he had to drill a tooth, he kept up a reassuring murmur of "There, there, shan't be long now," and at the slightest wince or whimper, he withdrew the cutting point, saying "Easy does it. No hurry. We'll just take a little rest," then he would go and browse among his instruments. The danger was that he might wander out of the room and not come back for half an hour or more. Once, returning and finding Emily, miserable prisoner of the chair, he said as though he had been seeking her all over the house, "Oh, that's where you are!"

UNLIKE MOST OTHER people in those spacious times, the Limestones did not keep a maid. The front door was opened by Mrs. Limestone with her pink, empty, melted face above a long neck, a lace blouse and a lace-edged apron. She acted as assistant when her husband was forced to extract a tooth, an extreme measure that he would avoid whenever possible, and would show her strength by letting the patient grip her hand and by wordlessly guiding the movements of Mr. Limestone whose fear was such he scarcely knew what he was doing.

When she was home, she kept an eye on the waiting-room and saw that no one was forgotten. When she was out, anything might happen. Once Emily had arrived for a three o'clock appointment and getting no answer, had been about to go when the door was opened by Mr. Limestone, hair towsled, eyes pink like those of a white rabbit, who hoarsely whispered "Yes, what is it?" Then, recognising Emily, he put her into the waiting-room where another patient, a small boy, was curled up asleep in a chair. "Won't be a minute," Mr. Limestone said and returned to the basement. Emily waited with the sleeping boy until Mrs. Limestone came back at five o'clock. "Better go home," Mrs. Limestone said, waking the boy and packing them off as though she scarcely knew what she might find below.

Emily had spent so long in the waiting-room she could have listed every item in it. The wallpaper was aflash with shaded squares, orange, fawn and brown. A large yellowish table crowded the centre of the room. It was littered with old copies of *Little Folks* and surrounded by eight straight-backed chairs whose leatherette seats were as good as new. No one sat in them. The children always threw themselves into the broken-down, tapestry arm-chairs that stood, one on either side of the fireplace. Though the grate held nothing but crumpled red paper, the whole area of the fireplace was hung with brass toasting-forks, chestnut pans and ornamental bellows, and there were so many fire-irons, dogs and hobs, it was scarcely possible to fit in the little electric fire which held a bar of heat on very cold days.

On either side of the chimney-breast there were built-in-cupboards which, Emily early discovered, were filled with grown-up books. It was years before she took them out and looked at them. On the shelves above the cupboards there were, besides the electro-plated toast-racks, jam-dishes and other useful unused objects, statuettes of tall girls leading Alsatian dogs and small girls cuddling bunnies.

THE YEARS passed and there were changes outside in Camber, but none in the waiting-room. Even in Camber nothing changed completely. The tram-cars gave way to buses but the buses followed the arbitrary route of the tram-lines that were still there under the tarmac and could be seen in places when the tarmac rubbed away. The Band of Hope Hall opposite Mr. Limestone's house was turned into a cinema but when the Council permitted it to open on Sunday, the massed Baptist choir sang outside, making so much noise that people asked for their money back.

As for Emily, waiting in the waiting-room, she had started to rummage in the fireside cupboards, hoping the hidden books would help her to solve some of life's mysteries. They did solve mysteries, but not those of this world. They all treated of one subject: Spiritualism.

At first Emily was excited by them. She had been discouraged by the picture of Heaven given at St. Luke's, Camber (N),

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and had rejected it as soon as she discovered Bernard Shaw. Now she found that people called mediums were in direct touch with the Other Side and showed it to be nothing like the boring hymn-singing Heaven of St. Luke's. In fact, the spirits revealed, the Other Side was much like this Side, only nicer. Innocent pleasures enjoyed here by the few, could there be enjoyed by everyone. Supposing, one writer said, you occasionally indulged in the luxury of a cigar! On the Other Side you had only to wish for a cigar and a box of the Very Best would appear in your hand.

"Chocolates, too," Emily hoped.

The *mise en scène* where these wonders occurred was all green lawns, trees, roses, lilies, crystal fountains, sweet breezes, and balmy airs. Book after book assured the reader that the Other Side was a garden set in perpetual summer. "It's beautiful," the mediums said: "Everything's beautiful."

"And then what happens?" Emily wondered, but nothing, it seemed, happened. The Other Side was as static as the garden painted on the safety curtain at the Pier concert hall, and soon it looked to Emily just as dusty and faded.

Between visits, caught up in the rough and tumble of reality, she forgot the spirit world but when she returned to the Limestones' waiting-room, she would remember the nectar of the Hereafter and feel drawn back to it and read avidly for a while, then find it as insipid as before.

In one book a seance was described for those who, like Emily, knew nothing of procedure. When she learnt that the researchers sat round a dining-room table, she looked anew at the Limestones' table and imagined them sitting round it, fingers touching, and Mr. Limestone with head raised and eyes shut, saying in his sad little voice "It's beautiful. Everything's beautiful."

Emily now towered over Mr. Limestone and feeling there was something ridiculous about their relationship, she resented the hours wasted in the waiting-room and said she should go to a grown-up dentist. Soon it became what Mrs. Worple called "a battle" to get her to go at all, and the battle became grim when Emily was invited to Lilac Mittens' birthday party on the same half-term afternoon that had been appointed for a session with Mr. Limestone. Emily demanded that the appointment be changed. Mrs. Worple refused to change it.

Though she boasted of her inability to control her children, Mrs. Worple could on occasions be adamant. These occasions always related to any suggested alteration in the scheme of things. She could not bear a picture, ornament, or piece of furniture to be moved from its place in the household. Arrangements made for the future must not be unmade. Appointments that had been made by letter had a rigidity all their own. Nothing would induce Mrs. Worple to write to Mr. Limestone and change Emily's appointment, and it was a measure of Emily's immaturity that she dare not write herself or fail to keep it. As a last resort, she burst into tears and Mrs. Worple hit back by raising her eyes to heaven and asking "Haven't I borne enough?"

WHEN SHE ADDRESSED the Almighty, Mrs. Worple would do so in an anguished wail that always defeated Emily. So Emily argued no more but when the afternoon came she set out early, wearing her party frock under her coat, determined to get Mr. Limestone over and done with. Mrs. Limestone appeared at the door with her hat on. A bad omen. Emily appealed to her in a confiding manner: "I'm going to a party, Mrs. Limestone. Do you think Mr. Limestone could do my tooth straight away?"

"We'll see," Mrs. Limestone said, not committing herself, but she went straight down to the basement where Mr. Limestone had his being, and a few minutes later he appeared, abject, in a newly starched jacket, his wife at his heels, self-satisfied and a little breathless as though she had taken him by the collar and pushed him up the stairs. She now had on her rat-grey coat and imitation silver fox fur: "I'm off," she said, and off she went.

Mr. Limestone said resignedly "Come along, Emily," and led the way to the back

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room where the blue plush dental chair stood in the chilly, silvery light of the half-frosted window. The upper pane that sometimes held the distraction of clouds, held nothing now but the flat, grey February sky.

Emily, sitting down, tried to hurry Mr. Limestone by mentioning the party. Not listening, he said: "Put your head back. Open your mouth. *There's* a good girl," and went with maddening slowness from tooth to tooth. He tapped with his mirror: "That one ought to come out." The tooth, crowded sideways into Emily's lower jaw, had been condemned months before and Mr. Limestone would never have the nerve to pull it unsupported by his wife. When Emily said nothing, he sighed and moved on to the tooth that had to be filled. Changing the mirror for a sort of button-hook, he picked for several minutes at the decay before saying sombrely: "I'll have to cut it."

Snatching at his natural unwillingness to act, she said "I could come another time." He reflected deeply, then said with decision: "No. Let's get it over."

He packed her mouth with cotton-wool, an exacting process, then brought over the drill. Knowing that any squeak or shudder would delay the operation, Emily gripped the chair-arms and watched Mr. Limestone's nose that moved, too close for comfort, like a half moon across her vision. She could smell the peppermint which he sucked to sustain himself while he worked. Her fortitude was such that he said several times "There's a brave girl," then: "I think that will do. It's only a small cavity."

The worst over, Emily relaxed, thinking that even Mr. Limestone must soon be done, but it was amazing how long it took him to mix the little dab of filling. As he bent to apply it, hand trembling with creative effort, his anxiety was such that he swallowed his peppermint. He pushed and scraped at the filling, breathing loudly, taking so long that when he stepped back to survey his handiwork, Emily was ready to leap from the chair.

"We're not finished yet," he warned her and she reluctantly put her head back on the rest and reopened her mouth.

Mr. Limestone went to his table and searched among his equipment. He came back with a sliver of whalebone which he wedged between the newly filled tooth and its neighbour, saying: "Don't touch that. I want the filling to dry out. It's very important it shouldn't be disturbed."

Gagged with cotton-wool and whalebone, Emily watched Mr. Limestone to see he did not leave the room. Should he try to go, she was ready, or almost ready, to jump down and seize him. Yet he got away. One moment he was replacing his instruments in their box, the next he had gone. He went so quickly, quietly and suddenly, he seemed to dissolve among the shadows at the door. She gave a cry, but too late. She listened.

Sometimes, when Mrs. Limestone was home, there could be heard slight creaks and murmurs from the rooms below. Now there was no sound at all.

She felt tricked and could do nothing but wait. The waiting went on and on. There were no clocks in the waiting-room or surgery, no means of measuring time except by the change in the light. As she watched the sky turn from grey to pewter, she began to panic.

The party began at four-thirty and tea was at five. In Emily's circle it was not correct to arrive late, and one could lose by doing so. Emily had been late for the first meeting of the Drama Club and found that the elocution mistress had cast the play and left no part for her. She had never got over that and the rebuff may, for all she knew, have destroyed her chance of becoming a great actress. It was possible that Lilac's party had already begun and she sat in agony, imagining the bright room, the talk, the expectation, the brilliance of it all.

At last, unable to bear more, she sat up and considered her position. The silence was such, Mr. Limestone might have sunk down into the grave; yet he must be somewhere in the house. As the shadows deepened about her, she began to imagine him down in the basement with his hands on the table, his eyes shut, his little pale face raised as he whispered to himself "It's beautiful. Everything's beautiful." Fearful, she longed for

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Mrs. Limestone to come back. "Oh, Mrs. Limestone," she pleaded in her solitude, "*Please* ask Mr. Limestone to finish my tooth!" But Mrs. Limestone did not come.

Growing desperate, Emily did what she had never done before: she disobeyed Mr. Limestone. First she took the soaking cotton-wool out of her mouth, then she touched the whalebone filament. It was firmly fixed between the teeth and protruded so slightly, she could not get a grip on it. She might have gone, whalebone and all, but without the protecting cotton-wool, the filament cut into her lip.

She sat for some minutes on the chair edge, listening to silence, giving Mr. Limestone a last chance, then she slid down and tip-toed into the hall. She lent over the basement stairs and called in a small voice "Mr. Limestone." There was not a breath below.

Had he abandoned her completely? Had he left the house? She descended a few steps and spoke his name more boldly. Her voice died and not a sound returned to her. She went down further, breathing the lower air redolent with cooking fat and old floor-cloths, and saw through the shadows in the passage a daylight glimmer from a half open door. When she paused again, she knew he was there. She could hear him breathing.

She stood, daunted by the fact he did not answer, then it occurred to her that he might be ill. He could have fainted or had a heart attack or a stroke. With this excuse for trespass, she ran on down, ready to save Mr. Limestone's life. The half open door led to the kitchen. She saw a scrubbed deal table, an old dresser, a gas-stove, a sink—but no Mr. Limestone. Yet he was near. His breathing came more loudly. An inner door led to a scullery or pantry and knowing he must be there, she advanced cautiously until she could see inside. And there he was. An old dental chair, its plush bursting and spilling the interior wadding, stood inside the door and Mr. Limestone was sitting in it. She edged round to view him and saw his head propped on the rest, his eyes shut, his breath puffing out between his parted lips. His expression, tranquil, almost felicitous, told her he was not ill. He must be asleep; and before going to sleep, he had pulled up the sleeve of his white jacket and thrust a hypodermic needle into his arm. His poor, thin, little arm lay on his lap with the tip of the needle still clinging to the flesh.

WHAT AN EXTRAORDINARY thing to do! Having a dislike of injections herself, Emily edged nearer, repelled and bewildered, yet curious, and at her movement, Mr. Limestone's eyelids fluttered. He gave her an unseeing glance then seemed to sleep again.

She said "I must go, Mr. Limestone. I'm invited to a party," and for the first time in their long acquaintance, Mr. Limestone smiled. His smile was joyous, as though he had already reached the Other Side where pleasures were innocent and everything was beautiful.

In front of him, on a work-table, there were some small tools and a row of false teeth set in ruby gums and mounted on a base of chalk. Among the tools Emily saw a pair of pliers and stretching round Mr. Limestone's chair, she picked these up and used them to pluck the whalebone cleanly from between her teeth. Her relief was such, she became flippant and said with a giggle:

"I'm sorry, Mr. Limestone. I couldn't wait."

As she spoke, the front-door banged on the floor above and the sound sobered Mr. Limestone. He did not wake but his smile was gone in an instant. Emily, guilty, an intruder who must not be discovered, fled from the kitchen and made her escape through the back garden door. Running round the side of the house, she jumped on a bus and reached Lilac's party just as the guests were going in to tea.

Imagining she would be at fault, Emily decided to tell her mother nothing of this episode, but somehow it all came out.

Mrs. Worple was surprisingly indignant: "I sometimes thought... I suspected," she said: "Well, what a disgraceful thing!"

"What do you mean?"

Mrs. Worple would say no more but when Emily next complained of Mr. Limestone's slowness, her mother at once agreed it was

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time for both the children to attend a "grown-up" dentist. They never saw Mr. Limestone again.

He disappeared from Emily's mind and it was only now, twenty years later, that she remembered and understood Mr. Limestone's blissful smile. Her mother had disapproved, yet Emily could not disapprove. His may not have been an innocent pleasure, yet it seemed to her the pleasure of the innocent.

She came to the end of the Transport Museum feeling she had had enough of the past. She had had enough of Mr. Limestone, too. Faced with the Clapham traffic and the struggle to get home, she turned her back on his memory and said again "I must go, Mr. Limestone."

After a moment she thought to add "Goodbye." And that was all she could say to Mr. Limestone in an age that had given up innocence and received nothing in return.

On the Mimicry of Unnatural Objects

Look at this configuration; at this
Tactile (almost) acoustic of my mind.
Would or could you dream
That words could so agglutinate,
Such ideas exfoliate,
Organically eviscerate
From the whorling migraine
That pulses round the acorn
Death plants in the brain?

There are nights I walk the room
As if I bore, vessel-wise,
Enough nitroglycerine
To make it impossible
For anyone to recognise
What would be left if I jolted.
I should not have the door bolted.
Nor the curtains drawn. I should hope,
A hot-housed, blacked-out, heliotrope.

So I look at this configuration. Look.
It has risen like python sand on glass
Vibrating to the bow-string's blow,
Each dervish shape an instant vision
Cályxed and pavonian as snow
That fantastically burgeons
Beneath the rubric of the dark,
In weird, half-dead, blafard resurgence.

Seamus Deane

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Two Views of the Franks Report

What's Wrong with Oxford?

By Max Beloff

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD is held to rank as the third oldest in the world. When Harvard was founded, Oxford was already much older than Harvard is now. Nor does its fame rest on antiquity alone. In successive periods of rapid change it has been able continuously to adjust its educational functions to the different needs of society, and its share in extending the frontiers of knowledge to ever wider fields, alike in the natural sciences and humanities. The ever-increasing stream of students from overseas and of academic visitors of more senior standing testifies to its continuing attractive power. The combination of collegiate life with great flexibility and freedom in the choice of fields of study and in the methods of teaching—and this applies to teachers and taught alike—often strikes the visitor as deeply enviable. The student body—particularly perhaps the undergraduate student body—manages to organise a vigorous and varied extra-curricular existence without lavish facilities externally supplied and (despite the attentions of the national press) to use its high degree of freedom of expression including political freedom of expression with only rare departures from the limits imposed by a sense of responsibility. It is not surprising that where in other countries the mass-expansion of Universities which has been so marked a feature of the last two decades has created grave problems in the organisation of Universities, and in the attitudes of the student body, Oxford is looked to as a source of ideas for handling them. "The students," a California professor said recently, "will only come to identify with the University [at Berkeley] when a richer, more active student culture develops as at Harvard or Oxford. . . ."

An institution which commands such world-wide respect, which has continued to make such important contributions to so many fields of knowledge, whose graduates continue to supply so vital an element in British public life as well as in the worlds of scholarship, literature, and education, would in almost any other country be regarded as a major national asset. It is typical of the mood of contemporary Britain, with its widespread distrust of the individual and its creeping egalitarianism, that Oxford is far more often held up to ridicule and contempt than it is praised for its achievements. In a country whose influence in military and political terms has declined so steeply and whose future well-being depends, as we are so often told, upon the full use of its human resources, one would imagine that the first concern of statesmanship would be to cherish whatever institutions have best proved their worth and to see whether, though good, they cannot be made still better. On the contrary much of the comment one reads seems to emanate from people who either deny the particular excellences of Oxford, or while admitting them would willingly see them abolished if they cannot be created in equal measure in every University in the country. Some individuals manage to hold both positions simultaneously. Oxford is terrible—why can't everyone go there?

IT WAS NO DOUBT their awareness of these tendencies in the public mind and of the probability that a government would shortly come into power whose members would in many cases subscribe to such views that impelled the University's rulers to establish an inquiry of their own into possible reforms—rather than await the appointment of some

THE *two views of Oxford are by* MAX BELOFF, *who took his Modern History degree at Corpus Christi (Oxon. 1935) and is now Gladstone Professor of Government and Public Administration at All Souls (Oxford); and* FRANK KERMODE, *who took his B.A. and M.A. at the University of Liverpool (1940, 1947), taught at the Universities of Newcastle, Reading, and Manchester, and is now Winterstoke Professor of English at the University of Bristol.*

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external Commission that might be at once less knowledgeable and less sympathetic. Such a view of the true origin of the "Franks Commission" does not imply that there are no areas that do not call for well thought-out reforms. It would be odd if it were otherwise in a University where student numbers have almost doubled since before the war, and where the proportion of post-graduates has risen from about a tenth to about a quarter—to say nothing of other changes. But there can be no doubt that fear of what would happen if no evidence of a strong commitment to reform was provided was both one of the motives for establishing the Commission and one of the explanations of its curious composition. It has not been a question of the University looking at itself through the eyes of a group of its own scholars with long and continuous experience of its activities and problems, whether as students, teachers, or administrators; it has been far more an attempt to create from within something rather like an external inquiry—to choose people in most cases not because of their immersion in the University's daily life but because of their remoteness from it, to look for distinction not in scholarship but in public service, to demand sensitivity not to the University environment, but to the trends, opinions and prejudices prevalent in the world outside.

Both the strengths of the Report and its much more obvious weaknesses reflect the circumstances of its birth and the personal characteristics of the Commission's members.[1] Some of its more bizarre recommendations such as those dealing with faculty boards and their functions could clearly never have been made by people who had taken part in their work in recent years, instead of relying upon "taking evidence"—nor by people whose standpoint was that of the individual student and teacher, and are uninfluenced by the current dogmas of administrative theory.

WHAT THOSE in and outside Oxford interested in the future of the University have now got—and this is the main strength of the Report—is a full statistical picture of the changes that have taken place in the University over the forty odd years since the last Royal Commission; no one need now speak or write in ignorance of the facts about any measurable aspect of the University's affairs. In some cases —particularly on the financial side—the information is now available for the first time. How the students are selected, where they come from, broadly what they are taught and how, how the University is governed, what are the essential elements in the changing relations between the University and the colleges—these are all questions to which precise answers can now be given. And the fact that the Report follows so closely upon the Robbins Report[2] (to whose opinions on Oxford it attaches more importance than they deserve) means that much of the information can now be looked at in the light of the position and practices of other British Universities and even of the world academic community at large.

It is not only that comparisons can be made, but that the existing position of Oxford within the wider academic world can now be assessed. Indeed many of the changes that are necessary, and some that the Commission recommend, arise out of the fact that the system of higher education in Britain is now generally conceived of as a unitary one, that the University is primarily financed out of the Exchequer and that even the colleges through their financial relationship with the University and through the grant-aided status of the vast majority of students are directly concerned in the inevitable competition for access to the public purse. One result is the importance attached by the Commission to changes in the direction of centralisation and continuity where the government of the University is concerned so as to enable it to compete on more equal terms with Universities run on a more centralised basis, and in a more authoritarian manner. Public money is a great leveller. One could wish that the Commission had done more to suggest ways in which this dependence might be decreased rather than ways in which Oxford might make more certain of getting its proper share. One does not by this belittle the attention the Commission pays to finance. That part of what they say about the academic future of the University depends upon Oxford being financially able to recruit academic staff in numbers appropriate to the size of the undergraduate body; at present it ranks in this respect among the underprivileged where British Universities are concerned (though one's continental colleagues continue to envy the lavishness of our establishment by comparison with their own much greater paucity of staff).

THE DIFFICULTY IS that in handling the actual relationship between Oxford and the rest of the British University system, the members of the Commission are clearly caught in an inherent contradiction between the standards they

[1] *University of Oxford*. Report of Commission of Inquiry. 2 vols. Clarendon Press, 50s.

[2] *Higher Education*. Report of the Commission under the chairmanship of Lord Robbins. 1963. Cmnd. 2154. H.M.S.O., 15s.

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themselves set, and those which they feel dominate the public whose approval they seek. They rightly feel that the Robbins Report was too timid in drawing the full consequences of its recognition that Britain must have some Universities to be judged by international standards and that only a limited number of these could be supported by a national community of Britain's size. But they themselves are not much bolder. Although they make suggestions that would remove some of the material advantages enjoyed by some Oxford academics—in respect of both University and college emoluments—they feel that an upward differential of a limited kind is justified in order to preserve Oxford's drawing power. But their horizon is limited to Britain. They do not suggest that it might be desirable to compete at an international (*i.e.* American) level to meet the needs of particular fields of study. If the criteria are international, why not? One can only compete in world markets at world prices.

Nor is more than lip-service paid to attractions other than financial ones—for instance to the provision of proper administrative assistance to those senior scholars who undertake the very important and very considerable burden of dealing with the admission and subsequent problems of a growing and very variegated body of graduate students. No great University can permit so much valuable man-power to be spent on administrative chores. The same applies to the provision of apparatus and other aids to research in both science and the humanities. Where the latter are concerned, the Commission criticises faculty boards for their unawareness of these problems and suggests that "teachers and researchers in the arts should no longer hesitate to approach the General Board through the faculty boards for assistance in these ways." Knowing how limited are the financial resources available, it is not surprising that people have felt it more useful to look where there is money rather than where there clearly is not. If Oxford is to be maintained as a University judged by its scholarly output as measured on an international scale, then it will require from somewhere very considerable additional financial resources, even if the increment is so large as to promote further jealousies elsewhere. Meanwhile one looks through the Report in vain for a word of recognition of the way in which American Foundations have been willing in the past to step in to help Oxford in this respect. There are the libraries and whole fields of intellectual activity—regional studies (where the Commission has a total blind spot anyway) are a good example—which would hardly have got off the ground at all but for Rockefeller and Ford; and there are individual scholars whose indebtedness is no less great. In view of the fact that the great American Foundations are largely —and understandably—redirecting their aid to countries much less well-endowed than Britain, some more penetrating assessment of future needs might have resulted from giving more attention to the fact that Oxford's retention of its world role—like Britain's "independent" deterrent—has largely rested on the grace and favour of the United States.

BUT A GREAT UNIVERSITY depends not only upon the capacity of its staff and the facilities open to them but also upon the quality of its students. Here the wish to fall in with current egalitarian modes of thought is even more evident. Other great Universities which take intensive undergraduate teaching seriously—the continental tradition is different and Paris is a great University in a very different sense from Oxford or Harvard—look first at their intake from the point of view of the individual student's potential fitness for a highly concentrated period of study at a high level (and at Oxford this means only three years where most other major Universities have four or more) and to his suitability for membership of a community devoted to the free pursuit of learning. The Commission is oppressed by the fact that the traditional methods (competitive examinations, interviews, and the rest) result in the choices falling to a large extent upon the product of independent and direct grant schools. It is determined that there should be a change. Just as no one need be penalised by poverty from seeking a University place, so no one should be penalised by the inability of his or her school to give what has hitherto been thought of as a needful preparation for taking full advantage of what the University can offer. For this reason they put forward the proposal that a definite quota of entrants—they suggest one fifth of all places—should be reserved for those who will be tested on the basis of only four terms at school after the basic *O*-level examination, instead of seven terms, according to the standard hitherto accepted as normal.

The argument although basically directed towards meeting criticism of Oxford on the grounds of social exclusiveness is given a pretence of educational respectability with the argument that the present system must mean that there is a reservoir of untapped talent that Oxford never probes. No doubt the proportion of naturally talented children in less well equipped schools without full sixth-form opportunities is considerable. But ability to profit by Oxford—or any other University claiming

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world standards of performance—is not measured exclusively by natural endowment. It depends upon intellectual and personal motivation and habits of independent work which it is, or should be, the pride of good sixth forms to inculcate. If Oxford says all this does not matter —we can manage with cruder materials—what incentive will there be for local authorities to see that the movement towards comprehensive schools (another aspect of the same British failure of nerve in making educational distinctions) includes the provision of sixth forms as impressive as some of those in the schools they are to supersede? Is this not a blow to the whole teaching profession in foreshadowing the decline of the entire sixth-form concept? Nor can one accept the glib assurance of the Commission that the standards of work that can be expected of students can be identical in the case of two streams of entry at very different stages of intellectual and social maturity. From the national point of view, the important thing is to assure that places in Oxford are used to the best advantage; and that the undergraduate community can have in the Berkeley professor's phrase an "active student culture." Whether this means recruiting nothing but Etonians, Wykehamists, and the products of Manchester Grammar School—or on the contrary nothing but the products of the State system—or some appropriate combination of the two, as attention to both the individual and the collective good may dictate—is something for the University to decide for itself.[3]

THE COMMISSION have perhaps improved on Robbins in realism in their view that the growth in the University they recommend, in so far as it is to be in undergraduates, should not follow too decisively the line of consumer choice. Four classes are to be encouraged —women; natural and social scientists, and predictably but more dubiously technologists, while male undergraduates in the big arts schools are to be reduced in numbers. The main difficulty here is that, as the Commissioners themselves recognise, the pressure for places in the women's colleges lies in the traditional "women's subjects"—modern languages, English, history. The effort to persuade girls' schools to put their entrants in for other disciplines runs up against the shortage of suitable teachers as well as antique prejudice. It is a vicious circle whose possible solution is not easy to see. The question is which is to take priority—the faculties or the sex-ratio? If there are first-rate women being kept out of the big arts schools in favour of less good men, then there is a valid reason for questioning the whole idea of separate colleges for men and women. But genuine radicalism—as contrasted with the fashionable left-wing clichés of the moment—does not come easily to the Commission.

The combination of a civil-service-like passion for uniformity with remoteness from the realities of teaching and research underlies much of what the Commission says about the academic aspects of the University. Where post-graduates are concerned, the suggestion of creating new multiple faculty boards by a combination of the representatives of disparate disciplines with student bodies of very different sizes and qualities under their care, and with very different requirements in staff and finance, is so breathtakingly absurd that one can almost wonder if it is meant seriously. It would take an Ionesco to depict the likely course of debate on the new faculty board of "theology, philosophy, history, and music." But it may be that the intention is in fact serious—serious and sinister. It has been one of the special features of Oxford that social studies—the P.P.E. to which we owe, among others, the present leaders of our three political parties—have always involved an element of both philosophy and history. Indeed there is as between the faculty of modern history and the sub-faculty of politics a very large overlap of membership. One wonders if the deliberate separation of history and philosophy from social studies which the new structure would entail is intended to give wider scope for the kind of social studies that in their repudiation of the historical and philosophical approach commend themselves to the philistines of our day as "more practical."

The Commission make much of the gaps in Oxford's arrangements for post-graduate teaching, and some of their suggestions (faculty centres, for instance) while unoriginal, might possibly remedy the sense of intellectual isolation that some graduates feel. On the other hand, they perhaps pay too little attention to

[3] One might add as a postscript to this aspect of the Report the note that the importance that the Commission in fact attaches to Oxford's world role might be assessed from the fact that one minor recommendation is that the University "reconsider" its present very modest requirement of two languages as a condition of matriculation. Nothing is clearer than the fact that weakness on the language side is one of the most obvious results of the broadening of the Oxford intake that has already taken place. At a time when Britain is supposed to be "going into Europe," one might have thought that a reversal of this trend would be insisted upon, rather than another concession to the dogma of easy access.

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the desirability even at the post-graduate level of some intellectual contacts that do not focus round the student's own particular discipline. The Commission do not seem to have asked themselves why competition for places at Nuffield and St. Antony's is so strong and what arguments for a collegiate handling of the graduate problem might be derived from this fact. Furthermore, the concentration on faculty centres in the arts and social sciences may obliterate the importance of the fact that the growing-points of knowledge in these fields, as in the natural sciences, tend to be precisely at the points where different disciplines meet and overlap. The Commission's neglect of Oxford's promising beginnings with regional studies—almost exclusively owing to the initiatives taken by St. Antony's which the University has built upon with little recognition and few thanks—has already been noted. But the argument is a wider one. What Oxford needs, to judge from the path taken by many promising graduates, is something closer to Paris' *sixième section* (of the *Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes*) rather than isolated faculty libraries even with coffee bars attached.

THE SUBJECT IS AN important one for although the Commission (rightly) rejects the idea of Oxford becoming a purely graduate University it does envisage a further growth in the proportion of graduates from just under a quarter to a third of the whole; and it is at the graduate level (through the large international component of the student body) that Oxford makes its most far-reaching intellectual impact. What one misses is any questioning as to whether the present system does not admit to advanced study a number of people whose clarity about the direction of their own interests is insufficient for a real intellectual commitment, and whose quality hardly justifies the availability to them of the resources of a University of this kind. Graduate study should be a period of intense concentration in which the motivation is an internal one—it is not often easy to reconcile with other demands made by the early years of married life with which it is too often combined. It might be more productive if we waited a while to see whether the evidence of an urge towards research was actually present before encouraging so high a proportion of young people to postpone their entry into the world of practice. It would be better perhaps for Oxford to concentrate on providing facilities for further study to a rather senior age group than at present register for advanced degrees. No doubt such a move would partly depend upon national decision in the matter of grants, study leave and so on. But there is a question here that has not been faced.

WHERE UNDERGRADUATE teaching is concerned many Universities have paid Oxford the compliment of imitating the tutorial system in some form—it is generally held to be one of its major marks of distinction. No one would suggest that the tutorial system is not under strain at present. It is not equally well suited to all subjects and it makes enormous demands on the time and vitality of college tutors. There should be ample opportunity to experiment. But the Commission's own comments will hardly stand up to examination. They clearly start from the view that energies now being given to tutoring should be released, and make the positive proposal that no undergraduate should have more than one tutorial a week. But they support this case with the argument that the tutorial is an unsuitable instrument for conveying information, and that its only function should be intellectual "training."[4] In other subjects the distinction between imparting information and training the mind is not a real one—the mind has to be given the information as well as trained to assimilate it, and to make use of it. If the Commission had boldly accepted the American pattern and made lecture courses the compulsory core of our teaching, the case would have been at least arguable. Tutorials could then be regarded not as ways of covering a syllabus but as pure intellectual feasts. But the Commission do not recommend that students go to lectures, only that there be fewer lectures; and if this is to be the case, college tutors ought to be given freedom to decide how many tutorials a particular student requires at any particular juncture in his career.

Much of Oxford's reliance on the tutorial depends upon the assumption of wide reading which in a University with such short terms must mean vacation reading. The Commission are well aware that vacations are nowadays spent by most undergraduates in almost anything but reading, whether for reasons of genuine poverty, or because their families are unsympathetic to what seems to be a non-gainful use of their time, or because the call of adventure in the shape of hitch-hiking across the Himalayas, etc., is too strong. The Commission are right in thinking that the only real remedy must be vacation residence, and this will confront colleges with the problem of recouping

[4] No doubt Lord Franks' tutorials in philosophy thirty years ago conformed precisely to this model; but Oxford philosophy of that era was perhaps uniquely suitable to this kind of approach.

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themselves for the money they now get from providing housing facilities for "conferences." What resistance the University may meet if it endeavours to enforce this requirement—which the Commission unfortunately does not suggest—one does not know. The students themselves, families, grant-giving bodies may all have their objections. The proposed widening of the intake will produce a new class of students even less familiar with the book and the library. But a three-year University cannot compete in the world, unless, as a minimum, it has *all* the three years at its disposal.

ONE EXPLANATION for the rigidity with which the Commission lays down the rule of one tutorial only is its general lack of sympathy with the idea that colleges should compete among themselves for good examination results, and that tutors should do what they can to secure them. Indeed the whole notion that competition is a healthy element in any educational system is deeply alien to the egalitarian philosophy which dominates the Report—the Commission's evident dislike of scholarships might be adduced as evidence.

As far as Colleges themselves are concerned, the Commission admits that Oxford's character does depend upon it being a collegiate University—and here, again, the model is one that has been paid the compliment of imitation. But the whole direction of the recommendations lies in the direction first of transferring powers from the colleges to the University, and secondly, of equalising the colleges among themselves. One is surprised that it is not suggested that the colleges be known not by their historic names but by numbers for greater convenience.

A WORD ABOUT relations with the University. The main change lies in acknowledging that nearly all teachers will in future have duties to both the University and their college, and in providing that both be associated in their appointment. From the point of view of faculty boards, worried that colleges are unwilling to appoint to tutorial posts specialists needed to complete the faculty's complement, the proposal is likely to be welcomed. It has some technical difficulties—the division between men's and women's colleges is one. More important, it will almost certainly favour the dominant trends in any subject, the practitioners of the currently fashionable approach as against the dissenter. Colleges, it is sometimes alleged, are concerned about social conformity—though a look at some of one's colleagues impels one not to take this too seriously. Faculties will tend to go in for intellectual conformity, and we shall lose some precious variety—but this is an aspect of things that is not likely to have worried the tidy bureaucratic minds of the Commission. It is even more disquieting when this central control is proposed over research appointments. In future no college is to be allowed to make a senior research appointment unless the field of study has been approved of in advance by the relevant University body. But the best appointments are those made by selecting an individual for his own qualities after open competition without respect to a particular subject. Nor will colleges be allowed of their own volition to prolong appointments after seven years; here again their freedom to encourage fringe subjects or unusual approaches will be limited.

The proposal to have a Council of Colleges as part of the University machinery, although argued for on grounds of rapidity of decision and efficiency, does in fact mean regarding the colleges as a class of institutions capable of being represented, not as autonomous democracies. The financial proposals which would mulct the wealthier colleges for the benefit of the poorer is a scheme so strongly associated, and for so long, with one member of the Commission that it would have been surprising not to find it in the Report. It is undoubtedly true that a college with no important endowments is handicapped; though the Commission's view that because colleges are for the most part (albeit indirectly) in receipt of public funds they should be publicly accountable for their use of their own endowments as well, is likely to diminish their freedom of action and so to make their endowments less valuable to them—and to the University and the country. The scheme of using other colleges' money although not without precedent has its disadvantages. For one thing it is a clear discouragement to future benefactors; money given for specific purposes cannot be guaranteed to remain so tied.[5]

THE PROPOSALS FOR CHANGES in the government of the University and in some of its internal

[5] The most glaring instance in the formula that the Commission propose for their redistributive taxation scheme concerns Nuffield College. This college was endowed by the late Lord Nuffield for the specific purpose of research in the social sciences. It is now to be made to give up an important part of its revenue to assist the quite different purposes of the poorer undergraduate colleges. No doubt much of the revenue of colleges is being used for purposes that might have been uncongenial to their original founders—but there should be a decent interval before their wishes are ignored. Morality, good manners, and self-interest here happily coincide.

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financial arrangements are hardly of concern to a wider world. What does concern the wider world in Britain and abroad is the kind of role that Oxford should play, and the resources it needs in order to play it. The Commission either from conviction, or out of resignation to the inevitable, accepts on the University's behalf a very minor role. It is to become more than ever just one of the forty-odd institutions grouped under the aegis of the University Grants Commission; the proposed changes in the admissions system are recommended for national as well as Oxford adoption; its dependence upon public funds is to be made more explicit. The only concession to Oxford's world status is a differential in salaries so small as hardly to compensate for the higher cost of living that Oxford shares with London. Oxford's numbers are to be settled by reference to some national demand for places—even though, to go no further, it finds it impossible to house decently even its present numbers, particularly of post-graduates.

ANOTHER VISION would be possible—an Oxford that reckoned its contribution to the nation's needs in quality and not in quantity, in its contribution to knowledge not in the number of degrees awarded—an Oxford concerned to make itself more attractive to the best students by raising admission standards not by lowering them—an Oxford that was truly unconcerned about the social origins of its students and that was unafflicted by inverted snobbery or the passing values of Fleet Street—an Oxford perhaps smaller in numbers than today, but in which every student was given the fullest opportunity for self-development. Such a University cannot exist on public funds. Is it too late to try to seek to limit, if we cannot end, this dependence? We have appealed successfully for money to restore ancient buildings—could we not find money in order to restore ancient and threatened values?

But if such an appeal were to be made to Oxford's sons and daughters and to those all over the world who appreciate what the University has contributed to civilisation over the centuries, it would not be well received if it came from a University that accepted the view of itself that much of the Franks Report implies. To those who believe that Oxford still has much to give and that the present stringencies are inexorably reducing her role in the world of learning, who believe that much will be lost unless urgent action is taken, the Franks Report will come as a severe blow.

It is a pity that Lord Franks who has made important contributions to Britain's public life in more than one respect, should seek to be remembered in history as the Neville Chamberlain of Oxford's era of "appeasement."

THE READERS of ENCOUNTER have had more than enough of All Souls College and its affairs; but since it is the only college specifically dealt with, one must say one word in conclusion on this subject too.

In dealing with All Souls where financial resources will actually grow under the new University taxation formula, the tone of the Commission notably departs from its normal suavity. Clearly it regards the college as in need of radical reform and it presents its proposals in a form not far short of an ultimatum. But on the subject upon which the Commission was qualified to give its opinion on what the College can do for the University—post-graduates or not?—it is silent. Instead it demands the abolition of All Souls' links with the outside world in the form of its non-academic fellows—links that have made possible, for instance, its present close co-operation with the Law Reform Commission. The suggestion is the more peculiar in that Nuffield College is repeatedly praised for having "London" fellows, and in view of the general tendency of the Report to suggest that the University should cultivate closer links with the world of affairs. No evidence is given to show that such non-academic fellows in All Souls have been enemies of progress. Indeed if support for the former graduate scheme is to be considered a test of readiness for change, the majority of them were strongly favourable to it. Another demand for which no reason is given is that the number of professors attached to All Souls should be cut down—neither the administrative advantages of this concentration nor its appropriateness in a research college can have been considered—and no inquiries were made of the faculties concerned.

The major reason for resenting all these proposals—apart from their hectoring tone—is that they represent probably the only case in the Report of a matter being discussed that was never put, during the taking of oral evidence, to the institution concerned. Lord Franks was, a decade ago, the chairman of another celebrated body, the "committee on tribunals and inquiries." One remembers his insistence that persons holding inquiries are bound by the requirements of natural justice—*audi alteram partem*, etc. In dealing with All Souls, Lord Franks has forgotten his own precepts. It is a pity that what is after all an important if misguided document should be marred in this manner: it is also very difficult to explain.

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The Future of an Elite

An Outsider's View — By FRANK KERMODE

AS EVERYONE KNOWS, Robbins gave rise to Franks. Certain words of criticism in the Robbins Report were, the Chairman recently remarked, engraved upon the heart of the Commission much as "Calais" was on Queen Mary's, and it has been freely conjectured that Oxford undertook to take this long hard look at itself because it feared that somebody else, stimulated by Robbins, might otherwise do it more painfully. The new Report is thus one more benefit to accrue from the earlier and greater enquiry. It is possible that the Franks recommendations may have more practical success than those of Robbins, but that is a matter of relatively small importance if you reflect that Robbins achieved, against high odds, a revolutionary change in the country's attitude to higher education. Those of us who agreed with Kingsley Amis when he proclaimed (in this journal) that "more would mean worse" have been shown to be wrong, and even have to accept that post-Robbins statistics continue to increase the enormity of our error. If it turns out that in spite of the statistics more does mean worse, the fault will be with the universities for being over-resistant to change, and unwilling to allow for the altered sociology of the entry. The Robbins recommendations in this area are virtually incontestable.

Of course this does not mean that they will be fully implemented, and Lord Robbins has something to say about this in his book.[1] This is a notable work, archiepiscopal you might say, where the Franks Report is, though superbly, parochial. Made up of various occasional pieces —lectures, evidence before the Franks Commission—it is composed in a grave, heavily qualified, rather formal manner, which nevertheless does not prevent the author from moving quickly and decisively over the ground. He talks about matters which are of immediate concern to everybody, facts of which we can hardly be too often reminded: the size of the "pool of ability" and the evidence of disastrous waste. In England you still have five times as great a chance of entering a university if your father is a white-collar worker than if he is a manual worker. If your father was educated to the age of 18 your chance is sixteen times as good. Though to put this right would require changes in the whole society, something can be done to reduce the waste by enlarging the universities and increasing the numbers of graduate students; it is essential to Lord Robbins' position that the recommendations are directed towards our national survival, as well as to the achievement of a decent social texture and the increase of happiness. In this book he is eloquent in his regret that in many respects this high utilitarianism has been thwarted. He thinks the present governmental organisation of the Department of Education and Science potentially harmful, and he fears for the future independence of the University Grants Committee, a most important issue. But here I turn to what he has to say on some problems which also come up in the Franks Report.

THE FIRST OF THESE is the role of the new universities. Lord Robbins thinks they should be about the same size as Oxford and Cambridge, around 10,000, and believes that this size can be achieved without the sacrifice of qualities which are naturally easier to maintain in smaller institutions. "I am happy to see," he remarked in a speech in the House of Lords, "that the authorities of some of the new universities are of the same opinion." But by the same token he can hardly be happy that some are not. Only the other day I bought a copy of Dr. Sloman's Reith Lectures, *A University in the Making*, on a Brighton bookstall. It cost me 4d. It is not to be expected that a book concerned with the design of a university for 10,000 students, allowing for growth to 20,000 and incorporating a serious "two-storey" arrangement for graduate studies, should be favoured reading in Sussex. So far as I know Sussex has not changed its announced intention of moving up to 3,000 and then stopping; yet for all that might be said of its coevals there is no doubt that Sussex, academically chic as well as very expensive, has had most of the publicity,

[1] Lord Robbins, *The University in the Modern World*. Macmillan, 30s.

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and is probably the place most people think of when they think of the new universities. It is hard to avoid the view that the small new universities are above all a monument to the false optimism of the 'fifties, to the rediscovery of smartness and the charms of inequality; there was some aptness in the choice of Harold Macmillan as the first graduate of Sussex. A year or so ago a writer in the *New Statesman* described the Brighton plan, as set forth in a book rather vaingloriously entitled *The Idea of a New University*, as "extremely luxurious" and yet pretty close to that of the liberal arts colleges which Robbins rejected as an English solution. He also suggested that such places are paid for by neglecting the great workhorses of the system, the big redbricks, already suffering quite seriously in quality of faculty and admissions, and in prestige. At present we are hearing far more about relatively minor operations at, say, York and Sussex—one might almost add Oxford—than about the huge problems and responsibilities of the big urban universities. There is astonishing ignorance about what they are like, and even about the ways in which they differ from Oxbridge and newer places. Yet whatever we do about using the "pool of ability" must depend heavily on these "civic" universities. It seems high time for an enquiry here, a Royal Commission perhaps, during the years of the post-bulge lull we are, unfortunately, bound to have. These universities resemble Oxford in one respect if in no other: they need amendment, and could use publicity.

Secondly, Lord Robbins raises the question of the post-graduate. His Report recommended a three-tier graduate structure, and attempts are being made to build this, though there is naturally no assurance that the additional teachers required will be provided in the near future. The change is not merely administrative; what is involved is a one-year M.A. not by dissertation, *i.e.*, an advanced course requiring not the supervision of research but an extension of the sort of teaching done in undergraduate schools. This strikes me as one of the urgent needs: it would lengthen many university careers by a year, but three years is considered too few almost everywhere except in England, and in any case the more favoured entrants now have had an extra year or two in the Sixth Form; if certain of the Franks recommendations have the effect of diminishing third-year Sixths, as they are intended to do, it would be very sensible to add a year, in suitable cases, at the other end. Full acceptance of this proposal would greatly increase the value of university education, change the structure of undergraduate as well as graduate courses, and improve the professional life of university teachers. But it would be horribly expensive, not only in teachers but in libraries.

Here is one of the most intractable difficulties—not, of course, for Oxford, which is a largely undergraduate university with superb "graduate" libraries, nor for Cambridge and London, but for the "provincial" universities, with one or two partial exceptions. Lord Robbins remarks that the U.G.C. seems not to grasp that libraries vastly increase in importance when you pass into the sphere of graduate studies. But most of the universities grasp it perfectly. Some, as a hopeless second-best, rely on proximity to London. At La Jolla, a new campus of the University of California which is quite soon to have 27,000 students, and where they started with the graduate school, there is a teleprinter you can use to consult the catalogues of major Californian libraries, and I was even told of a future helicopter service from the library roof. But even these expensive expedients are not substitutes for having the books. Microfilm, including such large and inclusive series as the S.T.C. project, and the newer microcards, are helpful, but they are not cheap and they are not the real thing. And quite apart from old books there is the ever-growing supply of new ones, all expensive. This compels university libraries to be very selective, and one is always facing problems arising from honest but mistaken choices in the past. The contents of a university library ought not to be restricted by the taste and interests of a transient generation of dons.

A few years ago there was a proposal that Manchester should be added to the list of copyright libraries. This does not appear to have had much of a hearing, though the distribution of the present six is quite evidently unfair; it happens to be the sort of inequity we associate with living here, so nobody much cares. The three English copyright libraries are in Oxford, Cambridge, and London—none west of Oxford or north of Cambridge, and all within a semicircle of 60 miles radius. Although the publishers resent the copyright libraries we already have, there is obviously a case for adding another dozen to the list. Even if the price of books went up by a few pence no one would be much hurt, and we should be getting very cheaply what would, in the ordinary way of purchase, cost sums beyond the most beneficent dreams of the U.G.C. That body would, of course, be troubled by the consequential demands for buildings and staff. At all events it seems worth considering.

Such libraries wouldn't of course solve all the problems of the graduate school; even Oxford has some. As Lord Robbins said before

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the Franks Commission, "governments have not given nearly enough" for the support of graduate students, adding that Oxford might well think of diverting undergraduate scholarships, now much less necessary, to that end.

BUT MOST OF THE DIFFICULTIES I have been discussing are very un-Oxonian because they proceed from under-endowment. The radical difference between Oxford and the lesser universities is quite simply that Oxford is comparatively rich, has been rich for a long time, and means, now that three-quarters of its income derives from public funds, to go on being richer than the others. The *Report of the Commission of Enquiry* makes no bones about this. Its main recommendations are by now familiar, and it will be acknowledged that their object, whether they deal with purely internal matters such as administration, or with Oxford's status among the universities of England and of the world, is to keep Oxford on top. Nothing else could have been expected. But the assumption of the Commission that the interest of Oxford and the national interest are identical is one that outsiders might surely question, and *The Guardian,* in what struck me as much the best newspaper comment on the Report, did so. It asked the questions which could not appear in the brief of such a Commission.

> Underlying the recommendations of the Commission is the assumption that Oxford should continue to be responsible for the education of the nation's élite. Yet even if this were desirable, does Oxford's past performance indicate that it is still fitted for this role? Are we content with the élite that we have? Are we so sure that an Oxford education turns out the type of élite that we want?

The answers to these questions could be affirmative, but the point is that the Commission was incapable of allowing that they might be negative. So the Report suggests improvements in the relations between Oxford and the other English universities, provided that its privileges remain secure, and provided that it is enabled to play for England in what the Chairman calls "the big league." (The other teams in this, as I discovered by unofficial enquiry, are held to be Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Berkeley.)

I SHAN'T SAY MUCH about the internal reforms proposed—they are of more concern to Professor Beloff—though the inward- and outward-looking aspects of the *Report* aren't, of course, strictly separable. No doubt it is in the matter of internal reform that the recommendations will be debated and contested at Oxford; in this connection it was amusing to read the *Spectator* articles with which Dr. Bryan Wilson, Fellow of All Souls, straddled the *Report.* On 15 April he said that things ought to be left exactly as they are; on 13 May, after the publication of the *Report,* he said that they must discuss it at very great length and do nothing. Whether the proud academic democracy does anything about the *Report* really concerns the people outside only because Oxford is the best Oxford they have, and because they pay for a lot of it, so that the revision of the constitution drawn up by Archbishop Laud is ultimately to their interest.

The Guardian called many of the reforms obvious, though they can be both that and "large-scale and radical," which is what Lord Franks calls them. They would alter the balance of undergraduate and graduate, men and women, college and university, indeed the whole pattern of life and work in the University, which would nevertheless remain on the small side—13,000, compared with 100,000 at Paris, and 40,000 at Minnesota State, and whatever the figure is eventually going to be at the multiversity of California, with many campuses and up to 27,000 on each. In the matter of élites, it seems we are committed to very small ones.

To ensure that Oxford remains a great "international university" the Commission would preserve the collegiate system, though somewhat restricting the powers of the colleges; retain but reform the tutorial system; reshape the administration without damage to the democratic power of Congregation; and pay the teachers 10 per cent more than those in inferior universities because, being employed at Oxford, they are better teachers. Rich colleges will help poor ones, All Souls must pull its weight. But the extra 10 per cent will be paid, one supposes, by the Treasury. The teachers will be given less work to do so that they can write more books, which red-brick libraries may not be able to buy. Such are the reforms necessary to Oxford's big-league status, its power to compete for talent against the high American salaries. To the outsider, however, the most important of these proposed reforms is one I have not yet mentioned, namely that concerning the system of admission.

This is of immediate concern to all who share, in however mean a capacity, Oxford's burden of responsibility for higher education in this country. A whole chapter of the *Report* is devoted to it. Obviously the members of the Commission could not wholeheartedly share the desire of Robbins that talent should be more evenly spread, or his notion that élite-making should be deferred to the post-graduate years.

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In Oxford the élite is made at the undergraduate level, and this means an admission system devoted to the discovery of men who can be converted at the earlier stages. The fact is that the present system is extremely defective; much talent escapes. In the other universities we have long known this, and been glad of it. But the Commission wants to improve the cream-skimming, and so thin our buttermilk. They are especially concerned that some candidates now prefer the smarter new universities, or like the courses offered at the more enterprising red-bricks. They are also worried because only one-third of the people who get into universities actually apply to Oxford. Some maintained schools discourage application to Oxford, partly because it seems above their station, but mostly because they lack a third-year Sixth (not all approve of it) and cannot compete with schools which have one. It must be remembered that local authority grants to undergraduates are now practically universal, so that anybody can afford to go to Oxford if he can get in; the situation is radically different from that which obtained before the war, when, to adapt some remarks of Sir Maurice Bowra, the distribution of wealth ensured that there were approximately the same number of applicants as places. This happy but scandalous situation has gone for ever; Oxford can have its meritocratic pick, and there is nothing except the faults of the admission system to prevent its having the best, provided of course that the best can be induced to apply if they happen to be in maintained schools.

THE DIFFICULTY IS that Oxford, though it now belongs to U.C.C.A., has an admissions system quite different from the one, itself extremely clumsy and misleading, used by the other universities. To pass the Oxford entrance examinations you really need to be at a school which goes in for fast streaming and third- and fourth-year Sixth Forms. Ordinarily such a school will be independent or direct-grant, though it could be a very large maintained school. For this reason the percentage of children who get into Oxford from maintained schools is still only 40 per cent, certainly an improvement on the 19 per cent of 1938–39 (the independents have dropped, over the same period, from 55 per cent to 31 per cent) but still, and especially in view of the Robbins figures, grossly disproportionate. Statistics of subsequent academic performance (which of course ignore the less ponderable but highly valued aspects of Oxford life) show that entrants from maintained schools take more than the average number of Firsts in Schools, and those from independent schools less than the average.

Here the problem confronting the Commission was simply to prevent this wastage, which not only looks like social inequality but presumably also lowers the status and competitiveness of Oxford. Robbins demonstrated that the main problem lies in the rate of applications rather than in the rate of acceptances—that is, that the low entry from maintained schools, where statistically the main potential must be, is caused by the deterrent effect of the admission system. Headmasters of maintained schools will simply not send their boys and girls in the fourth term of the Sixth Form into the ordeal of an examination which is attuned to the knowledge and maturity of boys in their seventh or tenth term in the Sixth Form of Winchester or Manchester Grammar School; a headmaster told the Commission it was like sending lambs to the slaughter. So the Commission wants an examination suitable for two-year Sixth Forms, based not on achievement but promise. *A*-Level, which they rightly regard as a fallible basis for admissions, will presumably have to go on as a school-leaving certificate, but Lord Franks hopes that the other universities will follow suit, and join Oxford in a sort of common admissions examination. This sounds attractive, but might confirm the positions of the universities in a sort of league table. Of course the main object of the Commission is to get the best for Oxford; if this entails equality of opportunity among candidates, then this must be provided. If the others want to compete for top talent, they may; something can be done to prevent this competition becoming too serious by ensuring that the Oxford dons have more pay and more leave, in addition to all the other advantages of college and library. "Every university," said Lord Franks, "competes for talent, and there is no reason why Oxford should be debarred from the competition."

This jest may provoke "those who are unfamiliar," as *The Guardian* puts it, "with the unconscious arrogance in which Oxford and Cambridge excel"; but it can hardly be thought surprising that an Oxford Commission should settle for free competition and equality of opportunity at this point in time, when it has become obvious that this is exactly what is best for Oxford. They want, says Lord Franks, "a World Cup team," and he calls himself Oxford's Alf Ramsey. If Mr. Ramsey were shown statistics which proved, against expectation, that a high percentage of the best players were in minor leagues and combinations, he would want to include these obscure figures in the competition for places. It is to the credit of the Commission that they accept in advance the change in the social texture of Oxford

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which the new policy would ensure. But no one should suppose that the Commission's enlightened egalitarianism extends to the other *universities*. They seek, on the contrary, to increase the enormous advantage Oxford already has. If by putting its house in order it improves the general tone of the street we shall have to be grateful for this as a benignant side-effect.

IF CAMBRIDGE WERE to fall into line on the issue of size, Oxbridge would have an annual intake of about 6,000 candidates for first degrees—on the Robbins findings a very small proportion of the number of children who ought to read for degrees at universities which are as good as possible. If the universities admitted everybody who could matriculate (which is the ideal, and still sometimes the practice, of the American state universities) the proportion entering Oxbridge would be almost insignificant. In short, we are thrown back on Robbins; the question of élites is a trifling one if you think about these figures and the waste they suggest. Some or most of the Franks Report will be implemented; on expansion, I believe the decision is already taken, and Dr. Bryan Wilson may delay but cannot prevent great changes. But none of this will have much effect on the national issue. What will happen elsewhere?

THE NEW UNIVERSITIES will fulfil their schemes, for good or less good; and by the end of the century Essex and Lancaster may be bigger than Oxford. The CATS will have solved their problems and there will still not be enough places. Nor will there be any levelling *up*—I mean that one cannot foresee the revolution which would enable other universities to compete on equal terms with Oxbridge. Their lack is not so much old buildings and tradition and colleges, but money. Developments in red-bricks are related instantly to public money; in Oxford the public share is high and growing, but the colleges have private incomes (All Souls: a quarter of a million pounds a year, and no students). These incomes ensure freedom, democracy, an agreeable style of life. More pay and less work will help a bit more. It is hard to see any threat developing.

For myself I don't care whether Oxford succeeds in persuading the U.G.C. to increase its salaries, or whether it is true that its teachers are 10 per cent better than anybody else's. But I cannot read this excellently written and extremely interesting report without reflecting sadly on the folly of our national attitude to the lesser universities. One can read their future in their past. The history of higher education in England is a sad story. For centuries we managed with two universities (one still hears people speak of "the two universities" as if the others did not exist or were ridiculous impostures). It so happened that when the need for more grew obvious there was plenty of money to endow them; yet they were inadequately endowed. Manchester, for long the grandest of the red-bricks, almost died after its first mid-century decade. Like all the others it is now almost entirely dependent on the taxpayer, and it is extremely difficult to see why it has had no lasting benefits from the affluence of 19th-century Manchester. The Rylands Library, in the same city, is a striking example of what could be done in a few years when ample private benefaction operated in a favourable market. Of course there were benefactors, but not on the scale required to cancel centuries of delay. And what might have been done privately eighty years ago cannot be done now with public money. It might be done in California, but not here.

SO THE GREATNESS OF OXFORD will not be seriously challenged at home. My children will go there if they can get in; I hope Congregation hurries with the rationalised admission system. Once in, they may never have occasion to consider the price of Oxford's greatness and the superior teaching I hope they will be getting; they will never read the Robbins Report, where it is obliquely stated. They will not care that when there was money for more Oxfords nobody cared quite enough to make them, or that the effort of the 'fifties was partly wasted. They will be enjoying the rational pleasures of big-league Oxford, its Laudian statutes purged, All Souls full of world-class scholars, the tutors fresh from sabbaticals and warned against cramming, bearing its seven centuries of superiority forward into a confident future. They may not recognise my degree, or the university where I teach, but after all you can't expect to have an élite without paying for it.

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Column

I RECENTLY attended a kind of giant seminar organised by the London School of Economics. It lasted for four hours, was conducted by eight professors of politics from various universities, and was staged, which I think is the right word, for the benefit of the students of the Seminar on East European People's Democracies at the London School of Economics. And indeed they attended in large numbers, the lecture theatre was crowded with hungry sheep, looking down, not up, at their shepherds; but I am not sure that they were very well fed.

The subject of the seminar was: *Can the Party alone run a One-Party State?* This of course gave magnificent opportunities for semantic confusion and the massed professors gladly seized upon every one of them. When is a party not a party? What constitutes a one-party state? And in any case what does one mean by *running* a state? And no doubt this vision of a multiplicity of meanings was an excellent lesson to the students on the ambiguities implicit even in the most innocent phrases; the professors skirted round their subject as if it were poison ivy. Only the argument was conducted on so high a level of abstraction, and involved appeals to such a variety of disciplines, philosophical, historical, linguistic, economic, that I am not at all sure that it was worth listening to; the professors built a Babel not so much of tongues as of evasions. The discussion in some strange way succeeded in being at once both arid and of a bewildering, even surfeiting richness, and I could not help doubting whether this was really a very nourishing diet for undergraduates.

Perhaps I should have been less susceptible to such doubts if, simply from the point of view of the ancient art of rhetoric, that is, of exposition and persuasion, the professors' contributions to the seminar had not been of such distressingly low quality. From this point of view any professional speaker would have regarded most of them as beneath contempt, ill-prepared, if indeed prepared at all, inconsequent, incoherent, and with a total insensitivity to the needs of the young and eager audience that amounted to a display of gross bad manners.

But if the content of most of the professors' remarks was lamentable, the manner of their delivery was even worse. One of these eminent men addressed himself to a kind of familiar who, unseen to others, appeared to be located in the extreme top right-hand corner of the theatre. What he had to say was evidently part of some endless dialogue which was not intended to be overheard; from time to time the lecturer would concede, with a spasm of pain, that his invisible opponent had scored a palpable hit, occasionally so devastating that he was reduced to anguished silence, interrupted only by a few broken cries.

Another confided his thoughts to an angel whom he carried deep in his bosom; occasionally a rather charming smile conveyed to us that his totally inaudible confidences were extremely witty and amusing. A third was so distraught by the complexity and incommunicability of his ideas that he succeeded only in creating an impression of extreme mental and physical distress; one looked round anxiously for a doctor in the house. He reminded me of Goethe's description of Hamlet in *Wilhelm Meister*; "How he winds, agonises, advances and recoils, ever reminded, ever reminding himself, and at last almost loses his purpose from his thoughts, without ever again recovering his peace of mind." I suddenly felt distressed that young people, eager and anxious for knowledge, might have to spend three years in admiration and imitation of such preceptors.

★

PERHAPS there is some, though certainly not much, exaggeration in what I have written; and I must apologise if it makes me seem ungrateful to the London School of Economics for what was, in an unexpected way, a fascinating afternoon and evening. But there is no exaggeration in saying that such performances conform to what is on the whole the abysmally low standard of lecturing in most English universities. And since the lecture remains, outside the older universities, the principal medium of communication between a university teacher and his students, and the form in which the students are expected to acquire knowledge most conveniently, this seems to be a matter that would be worth-while looking into.

Until it is, I hope very much that the University of Oxford will, in the interests of the undergraduate, resist the Franks Commission's recommendation that the number of tutorials should be reduced; unless of course the university also takes seriously the Commission's other recommendation that appointments beneath the rank of Professor and Reader should not be made permanent and should only be renewed

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after evidence of competence. But whether competence, in this context, will include the proved ability to deliver a lecture which is carefully prepared, adapted to the needs of students, capable of arousing and retaining their interest, and delivered in a manner calculated to inspire respect rather than mockery, is an entirely different matter. At provincial universities there has existed for many years a so-called efficiency bar to promotion from the lower grades of university lectureship; I doubt if the capacity to deliver a reasonably lucid, well constructed and interesting lecture has ever been taken into account in applying this test. There has been in *The Times* recently some discussion of how one can measure the "productivity" of universities. This seems to me a wholly misguided project; but if it were ever to be attempted, I would suggest that one reasonable test would be how many lectures are given which students attend willingly and with pleasure.

At the London School of Economics I was confirmed in all these thoughts by the incomparable superiority to anything which followed, in clarity, elegance and delivery, of Professor Raymond Aron's introductory address. But in this respect at least they have always ordered these things better in France, and it is a matter in which we might do well to imitate them. Professor Aron even spoke a language which was grammatically and syntactically correct and this was all the more admirable and refreshing since the language was not his own.

*

I BELIEVE that more rigorous requirements by the universities could very easily and very quickly improve the standard of lecturing, to the inestimable benefit of those captive audiences, the students. There are however other academic vices which appear to be incurable. One sometimes wonders whether to be most dismayed by their barbarism or their folly; they are not specifically British, though even here they appear to be on the increase today.

It is perhaps unfortunate that they are most easily identifiable in the social sciences, which the Franks Commission has also urged upon Oxford's favourable attention. One of the most glaring is the application of disciplines and techniques which are appropriate and productive in the physical sciences to fields in which they could not conceivably be expected to produce significant results.

A particularly splendid example may be found in a recent article in *World Politics*, a quarterly of international politics sponsored by the Centre of International Studies at Princeton University. It is called "The Composition and Status Ordering of the International System: 1815–1940," by J. David Singer and Melvin Small. There was something about that title which immediately aroused my suspicions. I was not disappointed, particularly when the article's introductory paragraphs provided the promising sentence:

> Our procedure will be to discuss the concept of status and attributed importance in international relations theory and its theoretical relevance, and then go on to ways in which it might be measured.

It would perhaps be pedantic to point out that the authors do not quite make it clear whether it is the "concept of status" or "its theoretical relevance" which is to be measured; after all, what does it matter what we are measuring, as long as we are measuring something. They go on to say that

> a great many hypotheses relevant to the growth of international relations theory may be generated around the concept of status and attributed importance, but they cannot be tested in the absence of operational measures and indices. The purpose of this article is to suggest such a measure.

The "measure" turns out to be a system of awarding "status-points" to states who are accepted as members of the international order, based on the diplomatic rank granted to their representatives abroad, on the following scale:

> CLASS I. Ambassador, or equivalent. *3 points.*
> CLASS II. Minister, Minister Resident, or Envoy. *2 points.*
> CLASS III. Chargé d'Affaires, or equivalent. *1 point.*

On this basis (and having first overcome, by means of another carefully weighted index, the difficulty of what states are to be admitted, and at what time, to the international system) the authors construct a fascinating table giving the "status-order" of states by half-decades from 1815–1940, a kind of League table of international status. In this, England takes the lead from 1817–1819, loses it to France from 1824–1832, regains it in 1832–1840, loses it from 1840–1854, regains it from 1854–1859, loses it from 1859–1894, when she sank into third place below Germany and France, rises to second place below Germany in 1899, sinks again to third in 1904, rises to first, with the United States second, in 1909, sinks to third place below the United States and France in 1914, sinks to fifth place in 1920, in that astonishing season when Spain spectacularly won the championship, rises to second in 1925 and thereafter is content to be a modest third to France and the United States.

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Not a bad record. But this is only to follow the giants of the League, like football fans who are not content with anything less glamorous than Tottenham Hotspur. My own favourites are the Grand Duchy of Hesse (not to be confused with Electoral Hesse) which never got higher than twenty-fifth before being relegated to limbo in 1850; or the Two Sicilies, a gallant fifth from 1817–1819, and never lower than thirteenth until 1864; or best of all the Yemen, which was only promoted to the League in 1935 and hadn't scored a point by 1940.

THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT that the construction of this absurd table has cost its authors a great deal of work and, if one may so call it, thought. They have counted status-symbols assiduously in the *International Yearbook and Statesman's Who's Who*, the *Diplomatic Year Book*, the *Statesman's Yearbook*, the *Almanach de Paris* and the *Europa Year Book*. Their searches even led them finally to the *Almanach de Gotha*, which came to them as a revelation.

Nor is there any doubt that the authors are worthy, eminent and conscientious scholars. David Singer is Professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan. Melvin Small is Assistant Professor of History at Wayne State University. No doubt their article will win them further academic distinction, even if they cannot perhaps hope to rival their fellow-contributor to *World Politics* who holds the proud title of Director of the Dimensionality of Nations Project at Yale.

Yet the truth about their article is that it does nothing whatever to advance knowledge in any significant, or even insignificant, way; certainly it gives no kind of justification to their claim that their concept of status, or their purported measurement of it, throws a useful light on the relationship between states. All that their elaborate table (or another table, in which it is refined by an "iterative weighting procedure") does, is to give a bogus arithmetical form to relationships which cannot be reduced to arithmetic and to give the aspect of a scientific conclusion to something which in so far as it is valid at all, is simply a re-statement of known and trivial facts.

PERHAPS ALL THIS does not much matter. Pope long ago taught us, in *The Dunciad*,

> *"How index-learning turns no student pale*
> *Yet holds the eel of science by the tail."*

Yet such articles as this carry the authority and prestige of a great university and the imprint of an important research centre which is no doubt in receipt of large funds from one or more of those philanthropic foundations on which the entire research industry depends for its finances. It will be offered as a model for students, particularly postgraduate ones struggling to achieve the Ph.D. which is the first step to an Assistant Professorship, and will no doubt stimulate an even larger flow of funds to support the work of counting the uncountable. In our universities today, research of this kind threatens to become a modern version of that species of Dullness which inspired Pope to so much mockery and poetry, and perhaps, so far as learning, education, and sense are concerned, the end will be precisely what he foresaw as the result of its triumph:

> *"Lo, thy dread empire, Chaos! is restored:*
> *Light dies before thy uncreating word.*
> *Thy hand, great Anarch, lets the curtain fall,*
> *And universal darkness buries all."*

*

IT SHOULD BE refreshing, and usually is, to turn aside from academic controversy to the world from which it sometimes seems so far removed. But the world is today so strange a place that it sometimes provides us with experiences which make one think one might be lucky if one could withdraw to the womb of academic life.

Recently I spent a weekend at the seaside in Kent. The last blizzards and rainstorms of spring had passed; the orchards were flowering. The beach was bare and deserted, seagulls hovered like helicopters over the waves, sunlight was dazzlingly reflected from the innumerable small pools left behind by the retreating tide. Behind the beach stood a large hotel, built, one imagined, about 1900, with an opulent Edwardian air which reminded one that once families actually stayed at the English seaside instead of flying to the Costa Brava.

I went into the bar for a drink. It was empty except for the barman, a young man with a foreign accent which I could not quite place. I asked him where he came from, and, when he replied "From South West Africa," I asked him what he was doing in this deserted hotel. "I'm leaving soon," he said. "I've saved up enough money to go to London and spend a year doing nothing except paint, before I go back to our farm at Walvis Bay." This seemed sufficiently surprising; I was even more surprised when he told me that before coming to the hotel he had spent a year at a Baptist theological college in Leeds. He had been asked to leave because of his heterodox religious views. This did not surprise me. He was too

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good-looking to make a success of being a Baptist theologian.

"And before that?" I asked.

"I was a mercenary in the Congo." He said it as if it was the most natural thing in the world.

"What made you do that?"

"Because of the money. Two hundred pounds a month as a private, four hundred as an N.C.O., up to eight hundred as an officer. That's to say, if you were lucky, and were actually paid. I was lucky. I got my pay. That's why I can go to London."

He had fought for Tshombe. You signed on for five years, and if you tried to break your contract, you were shot immediately as a deserter, without benefit of court martial. He had been twice lucky. He had both been paid and had been wounded, and after lying out for six days, had been taken to hospital, where Tshombe's army, having other things to do, forgot about him, and when he had recovered he walked out to freedom.

He explained that even those who didn't get their pay made a good living because of the unlimited opportunities for looting. Normal procedure on entering a hostile village was to shoot one out of ten of its inhabitants, strip it and burn it down. Sometimes they shot them all. When they entered a town, or when on leave, they billeted themselves in the best hotels, ate and drank what they liked and enjoyed whatever pleasures the town afforded, free of charge; they were too dangerous for anyone to be so foolish as to present a bill. His companions were Belgians who had stayed behind, Frenchmen who had volunteered after the Legion had been disbanded, German SS men ("It was all child's play to them"), South Africans, some British, all attracted by the pay. They enjoyed the life; it was an easy game fighting savages, if you were equipped with modern weapons, as they were. Things became more difficult after the United Nations forces arrived.

I asked him if he had any regrets. "Yes," he said. "I used to think that savages were cruel. White men are worse." He had only recently ceased to have nightmares. When he came out of hospital, his hands shook so that he could not hold a glass. "And I can't eat pork any more. One night we entered a village, did the shooting, and in the evening had a delicious feast of roast pork. My Belgian sergeant, who was an old Congo hand, said it was so good because it was human. They had pork on the menu here yesterday. I had to go out and be sick."

I tell this horror story as it was told to me. In that empty bar, looking out at the misty blue of the Channel, it was as if one heard the heart of darkness beating. Despite Conrad and Eliot, "Mr. Kurtz, he dead" is not true. He lives on, with all his corrupt idealism, and somewhere in the jungle still celebrates his dreadful rites.

R.

"Who Was It Came"

Who was it came
Over the mountains bearing
Gifts we did not ask?

—Not the sapience of the thrush
Or the ant's perdurance,
Something a body might use—

Who was it brought
Cerements and a wrinkled skin,
A sour digestion

Over the mountains, offering
Crotchets and a rheumy gaze
And wits gone wandering?

Just when we thought to repossess
The taut frenzies of Chicago jazz
And bridal ardour

Here he comes,
Inexorable gaffer in an old hat
Croaking our names.

Daniel Hoffman

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Stendhal's *Charterhouse*

By Louis Kronenberger

FOR MOST discerning readers—there are those, to be sure, who find Stendhal uncongenial—*The Charterhouse of Parma* ranks among the greatest of novels, while scarcely any one, I think, would deny it a place with the very greatest novels of worldliness. It is this for two substantial reasons: because of its tone—its attitude of an urbane, unillusioned, enormously perceptive *homme du monde*; and again because of the level at which the worldliness operates. Our very scene is the court of a small early-19th-century principality. We are concerned with, so to speak, *professional* worldlings, with courtiers and politicos, great ladies and ministers of state. One's every move, be it never so trivial, tends to be a calculated one—because any move, in an audience chamber or merely on a dance floor, may have consequences. One's every word, even the merest banter, needs to be weighed, for every word will be communicated to others. The favour of the prince is no sooner won than it may be lost again; the favourite of the prince is no sooner established than he may be dismissed. Every social occasion is endowed with political significance; every comic *contretemps* may have tragic repercussions; every forgotten indiscretion may be strategically revived. At any given moment, the ruler's policy may derive from the ruler's vanity, even as his personal fears may occasion his whole court's fright. Moreover, the worldliness is all the greater here, all the more concentrated, because the scene is so limited, the stage so small. At this miniature court of this toylike principality, every one is the warier for being involved in the same wiles, for giving ear to the same gossip, for coveting the same places, for clinging to the same ropes, for being equally a contestant, a competitor, a conspirator. The whole thing has, in its blend of rather sinister worldly disguises and ticklish worldly mis-steps, now the sound of melodrama and now the tone of farce. But there are deeper sounds too, and profounder intimations—all that high comedy has to tell us, in its own way, of what is tragic in life.

For *The Charterhouse* goes beyond the usual worldling writer catching his worldling characters out; beyond a tearing off of masks and a mockery of pretences, beyond even the most extensive representation of social stances and sophisticated gambits. One reason why it is so great a novel of worldliness is that, without relaxing its worldliness, it transcends it—not by introducing copybook figures of greater nobility or idealism, not by counterpoising booted-and-spurred abstractions of ethics or philosophy, but by creating three particular magnificent characters, one of whom—Count Mosca—sums up what can be said both for and against the enlightened worldling, two others of whom—the hero Fabrizio, and the incomparable Duchess of Sanseverina—stand less outside the worldly scene than above it. It is not so much that they are incapable of mastering its ways as unwilling to submit to its laws; as that they are moved, in the great crises of their lives, by grander personal desires, by more urgent personal visions. They do not evade, they do not in the didactic sense renounce the worldly life; they enlarge upon it.

BUT BEHIND THEM is their creator; *in* them, indeed, is their creator, in each of the three there is one side or another of Stendhal. And Stendhal is more brilliantly endowed than even they are. E. M. Forster speaks somewhere of a not too happy encounter with Howard Sturgis, who conveyed the impression—Forster noted with amused malice—that Forster's books contained him and not he his books. Certainly Stendhal's books do not contain him, he contains them. We are particularly aware of this in *The Charterhouse*, aware not only of someone who can command a whole orchestra of human musical instruments, fiddles and flutes, trombones and tubas; who, again, can create an entire small state rich in history and geography

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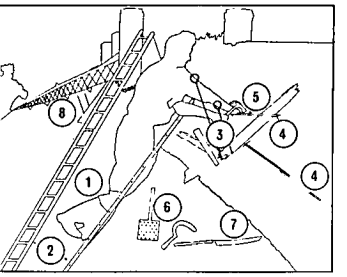
THE NORFOLK REED THATCHER



THE EASTERN COUNTIES are the home of the reed thatcher. A typical thatcher is Bob Farman. Address: W. R. Farman, Cherry Tree Lane, North Walsham, Norfolk. (Shell Touring Map No. 2, from your Shell Station.)

There are three main forms of thatching; long straw, combed wheat reed, and Norfolk or marsh reed.

The saltings of East Anglia provide the thatchers with their raw materials from the vast acreages of reed (*phragmites communis*). In winter, the hard gold-brown stems are cut, bundled and taken to the thatcher's yard.

Pictured is a thatcher, who with knees protected by leather pads **1** treadles his long ladders **2** with the rhythm and ease of a dancer.

Long thatching needles **3** keep the reed tight and hazel rods or "sways" **4** are used together with iron hooks **5** to fasten the thatch to the roof timbers.

The reed is dressed into place with a leggett **6**, a comb-like tool studded with horseshoe nails. The face of the finished work is also cleaned down with the leggett and a razor-sharp cutting knife **7** trims the thick ridging **8**. The ridge is capped with sedge grass (*cladium mariscus*) and is embellished with diamond or herring-bone patterns of 'liggers' and split hazel rods. The work of many thatchers can be identified by their own individual patterns.

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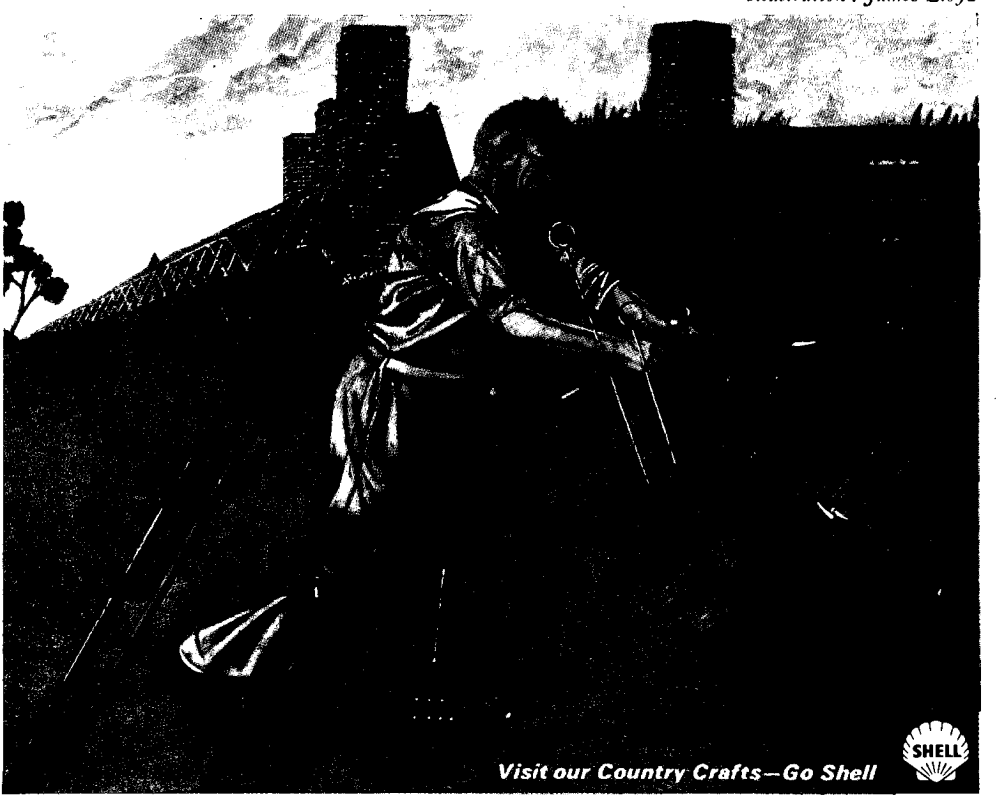

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alike, but someone who most of all can imbue the whole with something complex and multi-coloured, a kind of compass with all its varying points; a contradictory whole that subtly rejects what it seems to accept, makes comedy of what it seems to hold sacred, blithely stands on its head what it seems to have stood on a pedestal. It is a method that uses every kind of contrast as a form of criticism, but yet seems to find all forms of contrast inadequate as a guide—so that the final irony is the inadequacy of irony.

IF WE BEGIN at the simple level of story, how superbly engrossing a story—or, rather, an opera or film—we have. Here, as would seem at first, we have in Fabrizio an ideal *jeune premier*—a young man almost as innocent as Candide, but with some of the qualities, too, of a romantic hero. Actually the son of a French officer with whom his nobly-born mother had had an affair, Fabrizio is legally the son of a reactionary Italian marchese, a man between whom and Fabrizio there is bad blood. The Marchese del Dongo's sister, however, is infatuated with Fabrizio from his childhood; between these two is to develop an extraordinary relationship. At seventeen, Fabrizio, fired by an admiration for the Bonaparte who occupies his country, runs off to France and manages to be confusedly present at the battle of Waterloo. This is the first of the book's peculiar triumphs —the wholly unromantic, anti-heroic account it offers of Fabrizio's aimless wanderings on the day and very site of Waterloo.

Fabrizio eventually gets back to Italy, there are some piquant and revealing episodes of home life; but with Mosca's infatuation for Fabrizio's now widowed young aunt, the story begins shifting to its main theatre of action, to Parma —where Mosca is Prime Minister—and the court of Parma. The Parma of Stendhal's novel is a wholly imaginary small autocratic state, existing in a period suspended outside time—a world that in some ways suggests the Machiavellian Renaissance and in other ways shows touches of post-Napoleonic Europe. If it is Ruritanian in its compactness, if it can be Graustarkian in its events, it is very much, in its motivations, of the real world of society; and of the real world of politics in its manoeuvres. It is a kind of chessboard: a chessboard in the subtlety and stealthiness—and often the irrevocability—of its moves; a chessboard, again, in the danger of ably defending one part of the board while leaving others open to mortal attack; a chessboard, too, in the differing rank of the pieces, in the consistent sacrifice of pawns, and even knights and bishops, to win the game; and even in the arbitrariness of the colours—for the two political parties in Parma, though one purports to be liberal and the other reactionary, are in their tactics indistinguishable, just as in their relations with the prince and his police they are almost equally impotent. The prince, Ernesto IV, is a near-despot with much intelligence of a kind, with sardonic guile and malicious worldly understanding. His model is Louis XIV, his manner rather less effective; he is vain, deceitful, touchy, given now to mature insights, now to childish tyrannical impulses; and often simply frightened and unnerved.

MOSCA, Ernesto's Minister of State, Minister of Police, Prime Minister, is—as success in serving so devious and whimsical an autocrat would imply—a finished man of the world, adept at manoeuvre, adroit at all the arts of management, persuasion, diplomacy; unillusioned, unsentimental. He is not, however, the baser sort of finished worldling, bred to cynicism and callousness, but someone capable of humane judgments, tending towards humane policies, acting harshly where he must, but benevolently when he can. His passion for Fabrizio's aunt is the turning-point of his career: indeed, for love of her he is ready to abandon his career, to leave the Prince's service and live in modest retirement. He lacks the means to offer a good marriage, as he lacks the freedom: he is married already, though separated from his wife. Fabrizio's aunt, though Fabrizio is her real love, is yet much attracted to Mosca, and very much impressed by him. To join him at Parma as his obvious mistress would be hopelessly ill-advised; he therefore arranges for her to marry an ageing duke who will settle money and estates on her and, in return for being created an ambassador, never see her again. She therefore comes as a duke's wife to Parma so as to be, under impeccable circumstances, a prime minister's mistress. She—whom we can now call the Duchess of Sanseverina—is surely among the most delightful women in all fiction; but she is not simply a romantic heroine or charmer, she is a great woman with whom personal feeling and personal relationships are paramount. She is willing to play for big stakes over real issues. Beautiful, highborn, enchanting, she becomes the focal point of Parmesan social life. Living in the world, she knows all its ways, and on occasion employs its methods, wears its masks, stoops to its duplicities; but the Duchess is not essentially a woman who seeks power or would dominate the powerful. Quite the other way: it is personal fulfilment in the amplest sense that she wants—the attainment of an enlightened rather than emulous way of life, and of a world of happiness that lies beyond outward victories and sophisticated temptations. To say that this fearless

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woman of generous instincts is a force for good in the world suggests liberalistic virtue and ethical exertion; where with her what counts is not so much goodness as largeness, a kind of affirming courage, a contempt for the prudential hesitations so instinctive in the people about her. To get what she wants or destroy what she hates, she can be ruthless; but what she seeks in life is essentially ample and noble.

THE THIRD of our chief figures might seem to be the simplest. But Fabrizio is not simple at all, he is much less of a type and much more of an original than he at first seems to be. He goes through the motions of a certain kind of life, but he is untouched by much of it because it leaves him unattracted and unfulfilled. What is simple about him is his fundamental self, his wish for a life half born of romantic dreams and chivalrous idealism, and half imposed on him by his never being really at home with courts and society. Again and again, as he lives the customary life of gallantry and sex, he is pervaded by the feeling that he is incapable of love: which, as Martin Turnell remarks, may reveal a secret fear (one that Stendhal shared) of impotence. But it may also be, I think, that he cannot find love in court surroundings, because *there* he can never find its face—since love, for him, must have an air of difficulty, inaccessibility, high romance. Love, at any rate, only comes to him when, imprisoned in the great tower of Parma, he encounters Clélia under the most high-romantic—indeed wildly cinematic—circumstances. And indeed he is happiest as a prisoner in the tower, not just because he has fallen passionately and exaltedly in love, but because he has come upon a life that, despite its difficulties, *is* richly private, fundamentally hidden and dreamlike. The aristocratic young courtier in him that he has inwardly always rejected is now replaced by the knight errant, gazing daily at the *princesse lointaine* whom he has inwardly always envisaged.

At the same time, it is important to grasp that Fabrizio is no simple romantic innocent, is not even of the never-fully-mature type of a Tom Jones—the sort of hero who has countless experiences but very few adult reactions. Fabrizio can play the young man-about-court, and even the distinguished cleric, not only adroitly, but with considerable ironic enjoyment; he can also, on occasion, be very much the haughty patrician. It is his *nature* that is unsophisticated, not his conduct; as, again, his misfortune is much less an inability to speak other people's language than a failure to find others who speak his. He is one of those people, it seems to me, who go through life most happily talking to themselves. This in some sense, of course, is the artist's nature—and this side of Fabrizio reflects a side in Stendhal: that side of the artist which, for all its mingling with the world, remains aloof and alien, secret and uncorrupted, just as in Mosca, Stendhal gives us what was guileful, ironic, mature and worldly-wise in himself.

THESE THREE characters occupy the foreground of a novel whose background is a mesh of social and political intrigue, a maze of social and political manoeuvre, and all the paraphernalia of worldly calculation. Never elsewhere, in this sense, has anyone so fully as Stendhal held the mirror up to the very opposite of Nature, so fully held it up to masquerade. The commonest approach of current criticism towards *The Charterhouse* is as a political novel, and certainly it is notable as just that: indeed, the very framework—of a small autocratic state where everyone is jockeying for power—implies political action inside it. All the same, I think that a distinction needs to be made about *The Charterhouse* that so far as I know has not been: which is that it is essentially a novel of political *intrigue* rather than of political ideas, a kind of handbook on political tactics rather than a textbook of political thought. And in this sense it seems to me a political novel folded into something broader and more commodious: in other words, it is ultimately concerned with intrigue itself, with methods, with stratagems, whether political or social or sexual; whether inside ministries or throne rooms or boudoirs; whether in pursuit of power or position; whether a matter of false friendships or false vows. It is because *The Charterhouse* is concerned with worldly motives and ambitions on the political *and* the social *and* the personal side, having as much about it of Castiglione's *The Courtier* as of Machiavelli's *The Prince*, that it is a supreme novel of worldliness first, and a remarkable political novel secondarily.

Very much of the secondary, and sometimes primary, pleasure which the book provides has to do with political machinery no less than political machinations. One of the most delightful of creative enterprises for an author is setting up a history, a geography, a cosmology of his own; inventing a state, a capital, a dynasty such as Stendhal has done here, a miniature world which shall be made to seem real and in time take on more than factuality—take on power and significance. Stendhal's world has, in small compass, everything needed for Stendhal's purpose. Martin Turnell refers to it as a police state, and to the Prince as a dictator; but that, perhaps, gives it too purely modern a slant. Parma is rather a remnant of autocracy, of some-

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thing despotic by inheritance, than a foretaste of totalitarianism, with its pretence of a welfare state and a usurper-despot. Indeed, what is so peculiarly operatic about the manner and even the events of *The Charterhouse* springs from how old-fashioned and ornate an autocracy it is; any police-state conception, even as opera, lies far in the future and in the world of *verismo*. More important, a police state cannot easily ascend to high comedy, cannot explode at will into extravagance, or plummet into farce. What gives *The Charterhouse* both its Renaissance cunning and its rococo court life is its air of the *ancien régime*—and at a moment in the consciousness of Europe when the *ancien régime* has crystallised as precisely that: when a new order is set against it and triumphing over it.

IN THIS WORLD of Parma, which a little recalls the old description of Russia under the Czars—"autocracy tempered by assassination"—the ultras and liberals intrigue against one another with the utmost unscrupulousness, the great difficulty being that they tend to function with the utmost impotence, and that their political aims are dislocated by their personal ambitions. The official chief liberal is the governor of the Citadel, which is to say the head of the jail; and most of his prisoners are fellow-liberals whom he treats with all possible harshness. The farcically ironic use to which Stendhal puts the whole party system, the space he happily lavishes on all the strategems of party functionaries, as against how little he does with beliefs and ideas, further stresses how much more this is a novel of political intrigue than of political thought. Mosca who, though Prime Minister of the reactionary party, is Parma's best proponent of liberal tolerance—to *practise*, indeed, any kind of liberalism he must preach its opposite—even Mosca is concerned not with how best to persuade or convince Ernesto IV, but with how best to manage him: whether with coarse flattery or veiled threats, but in any case with the arts of the diplomat rather than the arguments of the statesman. As the plot thickens, it becomes Mosca's problem to manage the Prince as much in terms of the Duchess and Fabrizio, as of Parma's internal and foreign affairs. Moreover, at one of the great crises of the story, Mosca's horrible ministerial blunder constitutes one of Stendhal's most brilliant triumphs. When the Duchess, as the price of her remaining in Parma, forces the Prince to remove the prison sentence he has imposed on Fabrizio, and astutely stipulates that "these unjust proceedings shall have no consequence in the future"—in other words, that Fabrizio shall go permanently free—Mosca, drawing up the document for the Prince to sign, from a form of diplomatic caution that has become second nature with him, omits the safeguarding phrase, and so gives the Prince the chance to throw Fabrizio into the Citadel. This way in which he instinctively serves the Prince's interest rather than that of the woman he passionately loves is a just insight into human conditioning. It would certainly be possible, but I think unsound, to bring Freud into it and suggest that, by omitting the crucial phrase, Mosca is unconsciously conspiring the downfall of his rival with the Duchess.

THE WHOLE SCENE that culminates in Mosca drawing up the document is full of the most adroit and delicious high comedy, one of the scenes that contribute generally to *The Charterhouse*'s great distinction, but more particularly to its definitive portrayal of worldliness and its comic verve and wit. The scene itself is too long to quote, but we would be slighting the whole polished surface of the novel if we did not suggest by quotation Stendhal's manner, now of commenting on his people and now of characterising them.

The wit at times is pleasant and dry, but hardly vintage, as in the description of the Princess of Parma as imagining herself "to be the most unhappy person in the universe, a belief which made her perhaps the most trying." Again, the book exhibits what might be called high playfulness, something not easily removed from its context, it springs so fully out of the moment; but perhaps this small soliloquy of Fabrizio's, when while in prison he is falling in love with Clélia, will do:

> "But...," Fabrizio said to himself in astonishment, "I am forgetting to be angry. Can I be one of those stout hearts of which antiquity has furnished the world with several examples? How is this—I who was so much afraid of prison, I am in prison and I do not even remember to be sad! It is certainly a case where the fear was a hundred times worse than the evil.... Can it be the surprise of all these novel surroundings that is distracting me from the grief that I ought to feel?... In any case, it is indeed surprising to ... have to reason with oneself in order to be unhappy. Upon my soul, I come back to my theory, perhaps I have a noble character."

In a different vein, there are bits of maxim-making: "The lover thinks more often of reaching his mistress than the husband of guarding his wife; the prisoner thinks more often of escaping, than the gaoler of shutting the door." With such bright pleasantries the book is dotted, but they are merely the salted almonds or the *sauce piquante* of Stendhal's urbane feast. We must go beyond salon sarcasms, we must go

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to the worldly devices whereby people manage to function or advance themselves or survive. The Prince, talking to the Archbishop about Fabrizio's killing the actor who got in the way of one of his amours, remarks:

> In the Devil's name, one gets things of that sort done for one by somebody else . . . *besides*, one doesn't kill a comedian like Giletti, one buys him.

That represents someone very exalted speaking; here is the worldly reaction of a petty police official to whom Fabrizio has handed Giletti's passport, pretending that it is his own:

> Our hero was sufficiently alarmed, as we have seen; he would have been a great deal more so could he have read the thoughts that were disturbing the official's mind. This man was a friend of Giletti: one may judge of his surprise when he saw his friend's passport in the hands of a stranger; his first impulse was to have the stranger arrested, then it occurred to him that Giletti might easily have sold his passport to this fine young man, who presumably had been doing something disgraceful in Parma. "If I arrest him," he said to himself, "Giletti will get into trouble, they'll see at once that he has sold his passport; on the other hand, what will my superiors say if it's proved that I, a friend of Giletti, put a visa on his passport while it was carried by some one else?" The official got up with a yawn and said to Fabrizio: "Just a minute, sir"; then, availing himself of a professional formula, added: "A difficulty has arisen!"

—which is to say, he goes into another room and finds a pretext for having the passport stamped by someone else.

Here is the Sanseverina giving Fabrizio worldly advice, on his way to becoming an archbishop:

> Believe or not, as you choose, what they teach you, but *never raise any objection*. Imagine they are teaching you the rules of the game of whist; would you raise any objection to the rules of whist? I have told Count Mosca that you are a believer, and he is delighted to hear it; it is useful in this world and the next. But, if you believe, do not fall into the vulgar habit of speaking with horror of Voltaire, Diderot, Raynal and all those harebrained Frenchmen who paved the way to the Dual Chamber. Their names should not be allowed to pass your lips, but if you must mention them, speak of these gentlemen with a calm irony: they are people who have long since been refuted, and whose attacks are no longer of any consequence. Believe blindly everything they tell you at the Academy. Bear in mind that there are people who will make a careful note of your slightest objections; they will forgive you a little amorous intrigue if it is done in the proper way, but not a doubt: age stifles intrigue but encourages doubt. . . . The second idea which Count Mosca sends you is this: if there should occur to you a brilliant argument, a triumphant retort that will change the course of the conversation, don't give in to the temptation to shine; remain silent; people of any discernment will see your cleverness in your eyes. It will be time enough to be witty when you are a Bishop.

All this is the polished floor, and the often dangerously slippery one, over which the characters dance and the story moves. The story itself, however, is in no sense merely of the ballroom. Much of it, as we observed earlier, is operatic; almost all of it, which intensifies what is operatic, is Italian. Behind the uniforms and medals there are passionate bodies, and behind the masks, devious minds. In the course of the book Fabrizio kills a man; the Duchess has the ruler of Parma killed; the ruler himself kills whoever seems to menace him; the Duchess has the strongest amorous feelings for Fabrizio, as has Mosca for her, and Fabrizio for Clélia. Fabrizio escapes by a silken rope from a high tower; opportunists everywhere conspire, ruffians everywhere lie in wait, politicians everywhere bide their time. The effect of so much melodrama laced with so much urbanity is sometimes merely storybook, and at other times rather dreamlike and surrealist. At still other times, it becomes a particular type of opera—one in which the libretto runs to crude action but the music to refined commentary. Accompanying the flash of a stiletto will be an aria full of exquisite perception or ironic mockery. As the plot plunges into some new thicket of intrigue, the orchestra sounds chords of civilised ennui or despair. In a work like *The Charterhouse*, story and theme, action and reaction, surface and subsurface, present and past, often play antiphonal roles. So, most of all, do the romantic and the realistic in Stendhal's cosmos—or perhaps we might better say the romancer and the psychologist in Stendhal. The story lets us revel in the merely witty, entertaining, thrilling, almost frivolous, only for us to suddenly find ourselves—with all the torches extinguished—in the dark vault of self-interest, hearing strange animal screeches of treachery and malignity. This most operatic of stories is of course recounted in Stendhal's bare Code-Napoleon style; amid all the sword flourishes and rapier thrusts of his characters, he himself uses a plain pen.

HAVING EATEN our cake and enjoyed every rich crumb of the story, just what have we besides? I'm not sure just what: as no one can be more explicit than Stendhal, so no one at times seems more enigmatic. The sense of enigma derives to some degree from a total absence of dogma: the essence of Stendhal's worldly-wiseness is that one can pose no lasting answers or solutions. It is as easy to blueprint

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an imaginary principality as it is hard to chart the course of man's emotional or moral destiny. And so, when most serious or engaged, Stendhal may turn most whimsical and flippant: balked of reality, he will permit himself to play the conjurer. Doors sometimes magically fly open in *The Charterhouse*, with no realistic concern about any hand or key to open them with. Stendhal in one way is immensely creative in *The Charterhouse*, and by different standards hardly creative at all. Thus there is no immediacy about his people, no sense of what we might call the next-door neighbour; nor do characters or events come upon us as things known or seen.

Stendhal, in other words, does not create in the sense that he seems to re-create, as Jane Austen does, or Fielding, or Tolstoy. Perhaps one reason why Stendhal does not do this is that by creating *everything*—even his own detailed history and geography—very little seems familiar or near-at-hand. Despite what a Mosca may owe to a Metternich, and even a fictitious Parma to a historical Modena, the book is a perfect tissue of the artificial and imaginary. In going outside ordinary Nature, Stendhal is equally going inside his private self. And that, though at first it might not seem so, makes for less unity of effect than would the usual vision of the outside world. For where, by one's interpretation of things and view of life, one can harmonise the diversities of the outside world, when it is the contradictions of one's own complex inner self that provide the substance of one's book, the result may well be clouded and enigmatic.

What in other words we have in *The Charterhouse* is neither any sort of subjective or autobiographical novel on the one hand, nor any sort of objective and photographic novel on the other. We have instead a Stendhal who, however detached he may seem, is not so much detached as diffused. He has changed the banknote of his whole self into a number of coins, he has distributed himself among various characters—Mosca, Fabrizio, Palla, the Prince, the Duchess. Or say that there is a general flavour to the book in which we discern a variety of flavourings—this herb and that condiment, a certain strange syrup and some old brandy—removing any of which would be to mar the taste. The enigma of Stendhal is not, I think, so much any failure to communicate his feelings or thoughts as the impossibility of consolidating them; the impossibility for the contradictions to be neatly resolved, for the coins to turn back into the banknote. *The Charterhouse* is perhaps the greatest of worldly novels because it comprehends all worldliness within itself, but itself emerges as more than a critique of worldliness. Indeed, simply by its projection of Stendhal's own intellect and nature, it points up the inadequacy of all general critiques; it stresses how much all answers can leave unanswered. Hence the final taste of the book has incongruous and disconcerting and unruly flavours. Irony and comedy join hands, tragedy and farce embrace, passion sits cheek by jowl with mockery, charm with brutality, idealism with crime. The showman links arms with the philosopher, the fool with the sage; and along with torches that penetrate the darkness, fireworks glitter idly in the night. All this is perhaps not too far from Paul Valéry when he says that for him Stendhal is "a type of intelligence much more than he is a man of letters"—the wonderful play of Stendhal's mind and the way it becomes concrete through his characters and his cosmology; the way too, I myself would add, that it becomes a system of values by refusing, in any final sense, to formulate one.

THE BOOK'S WHOLE storybook setting is really an embodiment of Stendhal's mental universe; and it perhaps makes less for something enigmatic than too diversified to coalesce. Most books that seem to us very "personal" seem so because of the unmistakable signature they bear —whether of style, as in Sterne or Sir Thomas Browne; or in attitude, as in Jane Austen or Pope; or in a kind of unique vision, as in Melville or Dostoevsky; or sometimes in mere faultiness or excess, as in Thomas Wolfe or Tennessee Williams. *The Charterhouse* is much less personal than immensely individual, by bearing the stamp of a complex temperament and intelligence, by being not a mirror but a hall of mirrors. We get the whole diversified Stendhal because he is projected in terms of his substance, not his manner; of his story, not his storytelling; of distributing, not dramatising, himself. In this sense, Henri-Beylism, to revert to Stendhal's real name, is the complete reverse of Byronism.

Thus the book can have personal harmony without philosophical unity. The contrast in attitudes between, say, the Duchess and Mosca, between her purposefulness shaped by passion—what Stendhal calls *espagnolisme*—and his cautious sense of the world—what is half ironically called *logique*—creates a private conflict that is one of the eternal collisions of civilised morality: whether, one might say, to go at life on the other man's terms or on one's own; to go at it discreetly or defiantly; to keep as much as one can, or play for all or nothing. It is the opposition, no doubt, of the lion and the fox. We tend naturally to exalt the lion, and we do well to; except—and here the fox begins to speak—that if those who lack a lion's strength

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would themselves survive and serve others, they must needs take on some of the fox's cunning; for there are also wolves in the world, and vultures, and hyenas. In Stendhal himself, as in so many superior natures, the idealist and the enlightened worldling strive to complement each other, though at times their strife merely cripples both. In *The Charterhouse* it is Mosca, not the Duchess, who wins—Mosca who indeed wins the Duchess, without winning her heart or for that matter winning her for long; for she but a short while survives Fabrizio, who has had her heart always. Still, as we are told in that very last sentence of the book, in that mockery of a fairy-tale ending, Mosca was "immensely rich." Indeed he lived on, immensely powerful and useful and rich, when all the others were dead. And there is a kind of purely practical justice about his triumph. That the civilised man of sense, the benevolent compromiser who can use the world's weapons against the world, shall succeed is perhaps all we can realistically hope for in the world of politics. For if power corrupts, perhaps it is then best held by those who know it does, and are just a little corrupted —vaccinated, as it were, against corruption.

And it is Mosca too in the end who alone of the great trio *understands* politics: the Duchess is impatient of its rules, Fabrizio is indifferent to its ends. The Duchess and Fabrizio represent at bottom the private life, and reflect Stendhal's inner world: the Duchess is an aspect of what is single-minded in the artist's aim, Fabrizio of what is inviolable in the artist's nature, as they are incestuously joined in Stendhal's story. Except that, as I'm not sure has ever been stressed, the whole problem of incest is oddly ironic for being actually illusory—Fabrizio is no blood nephew of the Duchess, and we have here yet another chance to speculate on appearance and reality, on what might be called the morality of mirage.

HERE, THEN, is a novel of many and opposed attitudes; a hall of mirrors full of brilliant but conflicting lights. What gives it formal unity and workable proportions is the setting—the creation of a wonderfully compact small state that acts as a stout cord round a rather unwieldy bundle: for along with all the enchantments of make-believe go all the hard-headed involvements of politics and society. But beyond what is fantastic and, again, all too realistic, there is something particular and grand, appertaining to Stendhal's "happy few," to his idea of an *élite*. That is what is so splendid about the book, that it deals convincingly with immensely superior people. Their superiority is not altogether a moral one, we know how ruthless on occasion they can be; even less a spiritual one—there is nothing exalted about them, no more a religious sense of sin than a mystical sense of sainthood. Their superiority is not humanitarian either, they are no more concerned with self-sacrifice than sainthood. Their superiority is a matter of personal texture and stature, of something large, distinguished, aristocratic: they are, in the real right sense of the word, the best people, and their satisfaction lies in living for and with one another.

It is part of Stendhal's own nature, but also of the age he lived in, that these people impose themselves on us with a quick, assured sharpness; they do not go swathed in a latter-day, a Henry-Jamesian or Virginia-Woolfian, sensibility. As there is nothing gross or piglike about them, there is nothing bird-pecking; they are unafraid of being vulgar and so they *are* not vulgar. They are superior too, without being literary: they have not their author's manner, but the grand manner.

NOT SENSIBILITY of the modern kind is what so enriches this book; but that gaiety that Stendhal considered a mark of healthy art, and that great 18th-century endowment which Valéry noted, "the priceless gift of vivacity." Stendhal would have been amused, Valéry goes on to say, "had he been given a glimpse in a crystal globe of all his doctoral future—of how his witticisms were twisted into theories, his manias into precepts, of how his brief maxims were the basis for interminable commentaries, his few favourite motives the source of volumes of exegesis." Well, some exegesis is always called for with a great writer, and much of it is often useful; but with Stendhal, I would venture to say, it has proved particularly tiresome and costly, by giving modest nourishment to others at the cost of dehydrating Stendhal himself—Stendhal who of all writers perhaps loses most by dehydration, because his verve, his mockery, his mellowness, his impudence, his quick dancing impulses, his quick flashing insights, his ability to shadow the tragic in the sunlight of comedy, to glimpse the profound in the caperings of farce, are the very essence of his art. The element of quicksilver in him is the chiefest part of his artistic gold. *The Charterhouse of Parma* is not least operatic in that it has something of the unparaphrasableness, the untranslatability, of music.

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THEATRE

On Not Appreciating Mr. Coward

By John Weightman

IT SO HAPPENS that I have been to the theatre quite a lot during the last few weeks and have had the good fortune to see some astonishing performances: Mme Feuillère in *Partage de Midi* at the Odéon, giving such a tremendous display of ripe, theatrical perfection that she almost made that weird drama sound convincing; M. Robert Hirsch at the Théâtre de France, maintaining a persistent note of high frenzy for about three hours in Ionesco's latest play, *La soif et la faim*; Mme Paxinou at the Aldwych, moulding the air with rhetorical arms as she did the great Mediterranean *mamma* in *Hecuba*; and Miss Vanessa Redgrave at the Golders Green Hippodrome, deliciously touching and absurd as the dotty Edinburgh spinster in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*.

But I have also seen Mr. Noël Coward, whose name is as famous, or more famous, than any of these, and to him, strangely enough, I could hardly respond at all. In fact, neither his performance nor his material seemed in any way remarkable. On the two evenings when I watched *A Song at Twilight* and *Double Bill*, my heart sank further and further into my boots. I needn't expatiate on that horrible feeling of panic which sets in during the opening scenes of a play or a film when you sense that it is all slightly wrong and not for you, and that you will sit there, as in a gradually cooling bath, experiencing a progressively chilly sense of de-communion, while your brain races round trying to find the reasons why.

This was the first time I had watched Mr. Coward in the flesh or seen him in any full-length part, and I have never been a student of his works. I remember *Brief Encounter* as being, in parts, a very good film, and *Private Lives* made an amusing T.V. revival as a theatrical play about theatre people. I am not quite sure what I was expecting on this occasion. Perhaps I was looking forward to a polished, debonair performance, such as I have heard about from those few friends of mine who date from the Coward Age. Admittedly, none of the three parts Mr. Coward had written for himself—a sour, elderly homosexual, an expatriate publisher, and a simple, jolly American millionaire—called for polish or the airy touch, but he didn't seem to act them with much conviction, even as they were written. He had a way of getting up from his seat and moving jerkily about the stage or fiddling with the drinks tray that said quite clearly: "I must vary things here with a bit of business." More than once he appeared so bored with his lines that he couldn't remember them, and the clear, feminine voice of the prompter rang through the hush. And the pace! He lobbed the witticisms into the audience and waited for the crash of Philistine mirth. It usually occurred, but with the disjointed automatism of canned applause, totally unlike the warm, continuous ripple of appreciation that accompanied *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. In short, Mr. Coward was a sad disappointment to me, and the two evenings would have been a dead loss, but for the incidental satisfaction provided by Miss Irene Worth and Miss Lilli Palmer.

It occurs to me that I may have been the unhappy victim of a delusion. On both occasions the theatre was packed and the audience—apart from an old lady next to me who fell asleep—showed no sign of discouragement. I noticed, however, that it was a peculiar audience, for the most part middle-aged or even elderly, extremely prosperous in appearance, and given to discussing its private affairs in piercing tones and in what I take to be obsolescent language. During one interval, my wondering ears registered the fact that the person behind me was condemning a man of her acquaintance in a style that Shaw used for comic effect more than sixty years ago: "I can't stand the fellow," she was shrieking, "he's too clever by half." I might, then, have recovered some faith in my judgment by concluding that this was a Coward audience which had come back to the theatre, possibly after a long absence, to show its loyalty

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or recapture its youth and was, by definition, uncritical. But I listened to the B.B.C. Critics on two different Sundays and found that they too were almost unanimous in their delight at the proceedings. "Stylishness," "expertise" flew from lip to lip. "We salute the Master!" said the Chairman, summing up the general reaction. The newspaper accounts I read were almost as reverent, although they perhaps devoted less attention to the quality of the plays and Mr. Coward's acting than to the question of whether or not he was referring to Somerset Maugham in *A Song At Twilight*. Still, "the rediscovery of Coward" was a phrase that occurred more than once. In the *Evening Standard*, the ferocious Mr. Milton Shulman did not bare his claws at all, while in the *Observer*, Mr. Ronald Bryden even made a comparison between Mr. Coward's three fractious characters and the trio of mutual torturers in Sartre's *Huis Clos*.

ALL THIS IS A great puzzle to me. Granted that Mr. Coward's silences and throw-away style of non-acting may have a subtlety that escapes me, how can the works themselves be considered as anything more than mediocre? In each, the fundamental idea is a stage contrivance rather than a genuine thought. In *A Song at Twilight*, set in 1966, we have to suppose that a famous elderly author has, all his life, tried to conceal his homosexual practices from his closest friends and from the woman to whom he has been officially married for the last twenty years. It comes as a shock to him to discover that his wife has always known the truth, and that his ex-mistress has got hold of some incriminating letters. Now one can understand such a person hoping to maintain a *public* façade of heterosexuality, but it is quite incredible that he should have expected to preserve his secret from those nearest to him. Surely, there is not a single eminent person in any walk of life whose sexual tastes are not perfectly well known to those people in contact with him, such as his colleagues, his agent, and the journalists who have followed his career and who, of course, print only a fraction of what they have learned about him. What, indeed, would the people in the know gossip about, if they didn't discuss all those details that cannot, for the time being, be made public? Mr. Coward admits this to some extent by referring to his hero at one point as an "ostrich," but no sophisticated person of this kind could be such an ostrich. The real problem, in the case of a homosexual writer, is not whether people know about him or not, because they always do, but whether, by concealing his homosexuality in his work either for personal or commercial reasons, he has blighted his talent. It is arguable that Somerset Maughan—to mention only one of several contemporary names that spring to mind—might have been a better writer if he had dealt directly with his sentimental problems; after all, homosexuality is presumably one of the things that homosexual writers know most about, and it is an artistic tragedy that the law or public opinion should lead them to travesty their feelings. Mr. Coward avoids the issue by being on both sides at once; the wife says: "You are a great writer" and the mistress says, in effect: "You have never told the truth." One must be right and the other wrong, and that is the essential conflict, but Mr. Coward is content to have it both ways, because, instead of really dealing with the subject, he is writing a conventional, external, theatrical piece on the theme: will she hand over the letters or not? This is not concealed by the fact that, at the end, Mr. Coward looks bleak and sticks out his chin like Somerset Maugham. All the would-be serious part of the play is hollow; the jokes, such as they are, are mostly stuck in like sixpenny bits in a pudding, and the only valid scenes are those in which Miss Worth and Miss Palmer do their separate, and effective, turns as the German-refugee wife and the ageing beauty, gallantly battling against the years. Mr. Coward has provided them with the material, of course, but there is no play at the centre with which these turns have a necessary connection.

SHADOWS OF THE EVENING is almost as artificial, but rather less so, since it purports to deal with death, a more universal and approachable problem than homosexuality. An English publisher, living in exile with his mistress in the same Swiss hotel as in Play One (curiously enough, he has been there seven years and only returns to London occasionally "for a directors' meeting") is about to die of cancer. His mistress sends for his wife and the first part is largely taken up with their bickering and their discussion about whether to tell him or not. It turns out that he knows, so all that part is a waste of time. The crux of the matter is in the second act; what attitude will the three adopt towards his imminent death? There was some attempt here to express a contemporary agnostic view of extinction, but it was done in language so desultory and untheatrical that it sounded like the old Brains Trust on a dull day, and Miss Palmer, too, began to be afflicted with amnesia. The three characters were both uninteresting and unconvincing. Would a man who loved his wife and children (and who is given the emotional benefit of that feeling) go off to live in Switzerland

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with his mistress, even though he loved her too? The conflict was glossed over as a mere tension between the women, with the man, as it were, unaccountably *au-dessus de la mêlée*. But neither Miss Worth nor Miss Palmer had anything to get their teeth into, because their husband/lover was too empty for them to have any significant relationship with him. And would a publisher "who loves words" say "Come, my dear ones" and lead off his wife and mistress to an evening at the casino? All I got from the play was the impression that Mr. Coward, like the rest of us, has occasionally asked himself: "What will it be like when I know I am going to die?" and has not come up with any remarkable answer, except carry on as usual: champagne, evening dress and the casino. This may be the only answer, but again it hardly makes a dramatic work.

Even the title of the third play, *Come Into the Garden Maud,* is unsatisfactory, since it is a pointless Victorian reference. Maud is a hard-working, "natural," Sicilian princess with a Communist artist son, whose directness appeals to an American millionaire touring Europe with a snobbish, blue-rinse termagant of a wife. While the wife chases decadent royalty, the bluff millionaire elopes with the sensible princess. I think there is a much more insidious snobbishness at work here than that which is castigated in the abominable wife. Whether or not the intention is conscious, sound money sympathises with sound birth, and sound birth also has the additional modish virtue of a link with the political Left and artistic Bohemia, as well as the romantic simplicity of driving all night through the Alps in a Volkswagen. In other words, this is a slightly farcical version of the bourgeois drama about the fusion of aristocratic breeding and middle-class wealth that was written again and again during the second half of the 19th century. It is another set of theatrical conventions designed to flatter the sensibilities of the old-fashioned middle-class public rather than a new, contemporary play.

Well, that is a short and, I hope, reasoned statement of my delusion, if it is one. To be negative is always depressing, and I would have preferred to enthuse about Miss Redgrave —those long thin arms that are used to such good effect, that exquisitely blank composure, that enchanting imitation of the Edinburgh accent—but whereas pleasure can be savoured indefinitely in the inarticulate, bewilderment needs to resolve itself into words.

Nocturne for an Urban Summer

Wide shouldered shadows
lean into the park

steel studs creak
in leather jackets

starlite gleams
on their teeth

but their eyes
though sharper than broken bottles
and heavy as chains
stay lidded and lustreless

as on this shrouded ground
the dukes of despair become
the princes of terror.

John Haag

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NOTES & TOPICS

Still Beastly to the Germans?

SEVEN YEARS AGO I asked in these pages [ENCOUNTER, December 1959] when, in fact, there had *not* been a "crisis" in Anglo-German relations. For nearly a hundred years German nationalists had regarded England as their arch-enemy. For nearly a hundred years only half-hearted, intermittent efforts had been made to induce a better relationship between the two countries and the two peoples. Very few people on either side of the North Sea, it now seems, had ever believed that anything of lasting value could be achieved, and the most celebrated effort of all at peace-making—the flight of Neville Chamberlain to Munich—has, in retrospect, an air about it of opera bouffe. Yet I should freely admit that I was one among countless Englishmen who cheered Chamberlain on his return—possibly because I was too young to know better. It is surely the gravest criticism of all of our diplomacy that our friendliest gesture to Germany was made at a time when it was ruled by a ruthless dictator.

Seven years ago there were still plenty of reasons to be discouraged about Anglo-German relations. Konrad Adenauer had long before indicated that the Federal Republic should make close friends of the United States and France. He neither wanted nor made any parallel gesture towards Britain, whose pro-consul had ejected him from his post of Lord Mayor of Cologne and for whose matter-of-fact, mainly Protestant and pragmatic people he felt no affinity. Adenauer, goodness knows, had plenty of reasons for his distrust of the British. They had failed to join the European Common Market. They had shown a greater sympathy towards his Social Democratic opponents than towards his own Christian Democratic party. They had carried on with the dismantling of German industry after the United States and France had called a halt. The British press had treated him to its sardonic humour; its caricaturists depicted him with a clown's cap and bells, wearing jackboots and spiked *Pickelhaube* helmet, even rakishly attired as a female street-walker. And the British people, in Adenauer's view, refused to forget Belsen and give the Germans a fresh start. Decidedly, he did not care for them, nor they for him.

ADENAUER superimposed his personality on the German scene to a truly remarkable degree during his fourteen years in power. He made it impossible for a pro-British faction to emerge within the Federal government, although men like Ludwig Erhard and Gerhard Schroeder were openly friendly towards Britain. It was highly revealing when, three years ago, after the Franco-German friendship treaty had been signed, a section of the Christian Democratic press lost no time in warning Britain that it was no good feeling aggrieved or envious. It did not occur to such newspaper editors, who until recently have spent a disproportionate amount of their time sitting in their own offices mulling over their own thoughts, that the people of Britain were long ago heartily sick of Franco-German conflict. To any thinking Englishman, it has been the principal cause of two world wars and of an immense sacrifice of British blood and wealth. What Englishman, in his right senses, could want Franco-German enmity perpetuated?

The British are, however, themselves notoriously slow to forgive or forget. Seven years ago it was a common, indeed almost invariable experience, to find Englishmen shaking their heads sadly whenever Germany was mentioned. German Nationalism, they felt, had developed from a habit of mind into a disease; even the German younger generation, which was manifestly trying to grow up with ideas of its own, must be afflicted. The sins of their fathers would surely be visited on them too. And there was always that time-honoured platitude to fall back upon—"The leopard cannot change his spots." The British, it has to be admitted, have not particularly wanted to accept that a new Germany was in process of being created, however slowly, spasmodically and sometimes clumsily.

DURING THE LAST TWENTY YEARS there has been one other, very obvious, inhibiting factor affecting Anglo-German relations. It is the factor of the pre-war generation, meaning people who were born at the beginning of this century and

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who were in positions of authority and influence when the Second World War broke out. It was very hard for people of this age-group to forget or forgive the failures in the history of Anglo-German relations. On the German side it was argued that the Weimar Republic was never given a chance, that the Treaty of Versailles was basically unfair to Germany, and that Britain never lifted a finger to "stop Hitler." On the British side it was simply stated that "the Germans" would never learn. This age-group has been solidly entrenched in both countries until a very few years ago. It has suffered not only from the calcification of incipient old age, but from the traumatic experiences of two world wars and the conplexes which they have caused. German thinking has been further bedevilled by a love-hate complex; British thinking by a dull, bovine resentment.

The sexagenarians cannot be blamed for being affected by all this. Nor can they be blamed for clinging to power. It has, indeed, become axiomatic not to be regarded as "old" until the lid of the coffin has been screwed tight. But the shift of power from the sexagenarians to the 50- and 40-year-olds has begun in earnest, in spite of the urge not to lie down when one is very tired indeed and in spite of the skilful use on their patients by continental medicinemen of the glandular secretions of monkeys.

Today a younger generation is beginning to apply itself to the vexed problems of Anglo-German relations. This was very apparent at the recent conference of German and British editors held in London under the auspices of Mr. Cecil King. On the German side there was still an undue proportion of veterans, who were still determined to elaborate on their frozen attitudes of mind. But there were younger men, too, and it was enthralling to hear one of them explain his reasons for having demonstrated in 1948 against national frontiers, and another of them speaking with real feeling of Germany's debt of guilt towards the Czech people. In the past the Germans have been more prepared than most to make obeisance before the grey hairs of their elders and to identify senility with experience. This, it seems, is now changing. There has been no revolt against old age, but the beginning of a quiet take-over.

How will this affect Anglo-German relations? First, do not let it be supposed that there will be a spectacular flowering of Anglo-German understanding. Some of the remarks made by German and British speakers at the April conference in London made this clear. One German, for instance, claimed that Britain had only stayed out of the Common Market in order first "to see if it worked." Another suggested that the British Army of the Rhine was defending British rather than European interests. Yet another imagined that Britain would want France left out of the Common Market, if she herself were to enter it. On the British side there were suspicions about Germany's willingness to help Britain into Europe, about West German preoccupation with securing a voice in nuclear arms policies, and about German sincerity over solving the "German Question" through reunification. However friendly the atmosphere of this particular meeting, it illustrated the persisting feeling of mutual doubt.

Yet in the last seven years there has been real progress towards better Anglo-German relations. There are four main reasons for this. *1*. The Federal Republic has gone on working its passage with commendable honesty, as a sincere and valuable member of every western organisation which it has joined. *2*. The Germans really do want Britain "in" Europe, not just as a makeweight to General de Gaulle but as a solid factor in developing the Six into a more broadly based, more stable community. *3*. The British people has begun to be aware of the emergence of a younger generation of Germans who cannot even remember Nazism and who have grown up careful of their own thoughts and taking no direction from Germans tainted by Nazi ideology. This does suggest giving a new Germany a new chance.

Finally, familiarity—before breeding contempt—breeds familiarity. Both peoples have become increasingly aware of each other's problems and how intimately interlinked they are. They know today that they cannot exist without one another—and this was not apparent in the past and might not even have been true then. It is unthinkable that either country can plan for the future without taking the other fully into account. Was this true before 1939? The constellation of Europe was built out of countries with independent, generally purely selfish policies and existences. It appeared indestructible, but that particular myth has been dissipated for ever. The biggest reason for a real Anglo-German understanding, indeed, is one which may reflect no especial credit on either country—in fact, sheer necessity. To listen to Germans and Britons discussing their mutual problems today is to realise that they have at last found a common purpose: a Europe living in freedom and guided by common-sense towards ever greater unity.

Terence Prittie

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Camp Follower

IN *Modesty Blaise* the spy spoof becomes the plaything of the movie intelligentsia. Normally the quality of the direction in Bondian films ranges from the merely competent to the merely incompetent; here the director is Joseph Losey, an artist rather than an entertainer. And the title role is played by Monica Vitti, Antonioni's woman. Unlikely casting on both sides of the camera is the foundation of the film's mystique. A high-minded, didactic, unsmiling director has a gay romp in mass culture's currently favourite playground. A star celebrated for her dreamy passivity plays a woman of action. And the No. 1 romantic male lead in British pictures is seen as a mad queen in a grey wig: Dirk Bogarde. One of the film's recurrent whimsies is inexplicably to change the heroine's clothes or the colour of her hair between one shot and the next of the same scene; and the whole creation is likewise a game with personae. Metamorphosis is what it's about.

Modesty Blaise was born and lives in a comic strip in London's *Evening Standard,* written by Peter O'Donnell, drawn by Jim Holdaway. I am not myself a follower of this strip. The drawings are closer to turn-of-the-century Expressionism than I personally like strips to be; and too many words for my taste are packed in, giving a congested effect. But the author has composed a novel, *Modesty Blaise,*[1] which is based on his original script for the film—later re-written by Evan Jones, author of three earlier screen-plays for Losey, including *Eve,* with some changes in the plot and entirely different dialogue. The dialogue in the novel is unspeakable. Here Modesty (known as "Princess") is talking to her Cockney sidekick, Willie Garvin, who is saying:

> "You knew more about staying alive when you were twelve than Hagan's going to know when he's fifty."
>
> "Yes. But I'm still a woman."
>
> "He'll 'ave to forget that. Really forget it."
>
> "You don't forget it, Willie. You're always fussing over me."
>
> "Not once a caper's got 'ot, Princess," he said soberly. "If I'd ever done that we'd 've been tucked up in wooden overcoats a long while back. Go into a caper thinking you've got to do a bit of the other man's job, and you're cooked. You taught me that yourself."
>
> "No. You knew it long before, Willie. At Dien Bien Phu and a dozen points west. Maybe you didn't verbalise it as a principle before, but you knew it."
>
> She heard him chuckle. "I didn't verbalise anything as a principle before. Just used to react like one of Pavlov's ruddy dogs."

Modesty, then, is a bit of an intellectual—a sort of W.E.A. tutor. (Earlier she was telling Willie that "if you really try with Sibelius it's well worth the effort... you can always go back to old Mozart and the more tuneful kiddies.") She is a great hunter, but accepts that she is a woman. She has had a mature cunning since she was twelve, at which age (as the blurb says) she was "tramping across war-ravaged Europe, through refugee camps, across the Middle East, knowing hunger, rape, despair." Nevertheless:

> In love, she used her splendid body to give joyously and without restraint, ranging from glad submission to urgent demand. The happiness in her giving touched his mind with a glowing warmth; but more than that, she re-received his own gifts with the same unfettered joy as she gave, and this above all stirred the deepest wells of his being.
>
> He marvelled, as he had marvelled before, that this rare and unknowable girl could so easily lay aside the almost tangible composure which armoured her.

Thus Modesty is both Diana and Venus, with a touch of Minerva and the past of a waif. She is in fact tougher than Diana—thanks, perhaps, to having been a raped waif—for Diana could not bear to be seen naked by a man, whereas Modesty uses a tactic of war called "The Nailer" which involves stripping to the waist before confronting a number of the enemy: "The technique was guaranteed to nail a roomful of men, holding them frozen for at least two or three vital seconds." Modesty, then, in spite of her transvestism, is not really one of the male women of modern mythology: she is the *Überweib.* She is able to change herself at will from Diana into Venus into Diana. The metamorphic games of the film reflect her genius for self-transformation.

SHE IS EVERYTHING in turn, and the implication is that modern man is greedy. The Greeks created ideal figures incarnating single attributes. We have created goddesses within whom all skills and virtues are compatible.

Yet while we hanker after impossible compatibilities, we firmly exclude one that is not impossible—compatibility between sexual involvement and working partnership. We seem to want no couples like Hammett's Thin Man and his wife, or those played by Bogart and Bacall. In *The Avengers,* for instance, relations between the hero and his successive

[1] First published in 1965 by Souvenir Press. Paperback edition by Pan Books (3s. 6d.).

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heroines have been professionally effective, mutually respectful, humanly warm, and coyly asexual. (There has been one film lately, *Blindfold,* in which Rock Hudson and Claudia Cardinale fall in love and hunt spies together —perhaps it's this that gives the film its old-fashioned *circa*-1940 look.) Modesty Blaise sleeps with Hagan, likes him a lot, and he loves her: they are supposed to be working together, but constantly double-cross each other. Modesty and Willie Garvin are partners and friends unto death, but never partners in bed (though in the film they appear to be about to try it once). Their relationship is echoed by the principal villains: Mrs. Fothergill gets her kicks from beating-up and killing people; Gabriel gets his from watching her.

Willie, of course, has all the other girls he wants, and is always ready to interrupt coitus to obey a telephoned summons from the Princess. Is it pure loyalty? Does he secretly love her? When Modesty and Hagan are walking arm-in-arm, Willie is asked whether the sight of it hurts. "'Why should that 'urt?', he said, puzzled. His eyes were becoming a little unfocused now. 'She's entitled, isn't she?... I'm on a different page of the book to Hagan.... But if you come right down to it, I bet he'd rather be where I am than where he is.'" Brother and sister goes deeper than man and maid? Would sex spoil everything? Certainly, there is a puritanism underlying the display of permissiveness, sentimentality behind the hedonism.

The Greeks created deities with limited powers and allowed them to enjoy one another and mortals too. Our mythology creates omnipotent and omniscient deities, allows them to enjoy mortals, but not one another. We do seem to be managing to get between Mummy and Daddy.

FLIPPANT AND CAMP, the film eliminates the embarrassing solemnity of the book. The films from the Bond novels could have been played straight. The more romantic, more preposterous *Modesty Blaise* could only be filmed as a spoof.

The pleasure it gives derives, for me, mainly from Monica Vitti. She is an orgy for the eyes; her English is charming, her unease in the part endearing. The script is not funny enough. It needs more moments as good as the one when we enter a Sheikh's suite at the Ritz: it looks and sounds like a pin-table saloon. Too many of the jokes are too private. I laughed at the sight of the Sheikh sitting in the desert chortling over a copy of *Hansard,* found I was almost alone in laughing, realised that my laughter had been self-congratulation over having identified the book. The whole film, indeed, leans too heavily on achieving the kind of rapport with a knowing audience that used to sustain the 1940s-type intimate revues in their decline, with their cosy allusions to Larry and Bobby.

Losey was both a right and a wrong choice of director for the film. Wrong in that he tends to be heavy-handed. Right in that he glories in extravagant and perverse situations. He's a director, it seems to me, who makes good, almost great, sequences—such as those in the prison canteen in *The Criminal*—but who has yet to make a film that stands up. He seems unable to reject his good ideas for the sake of the work as a whole—to follow Picasso's precept: "When you begin a picture, you often make some pretty discoveries. You must be on your guard against these.... Otherwise you become your own connoisseur." And he constantly commits the two cardinal errors of the Expressionist: banging the audience over the head with his Meaning, rather than trusting them to sense a meaning for themselves; and insisting that particular characters and situations stand for Vast Generalities.

His flaws came across brutally in the showing of an almost intact print of his most personal utterance, *Eve* (a film that had been much tampered with for its commercial release) which climaxed the recent season of his works at the National Film Theatre. *Eve* was prefaced, at Losey's request, by an extract from Antonioni's *La Notte*—which, like *Eve,* had been photographed by Gianni di Venanzo, who died earlier this year. The extract showed Jeanne Moreau, who starred in *Eve* as well, walking around on the outskirts of a town, watching men firing rockets, a fight between two workers, planes overhead. Every shot functioned at three levels: the objective (this is just what the outskirts of a modern town look like); the subjective (this is how this woman sees things at this moment in her life); the symbolic (this means something about the human condition). Then came *Eve,* and everything was so frantically symbolic that reality was squeezed out, there was nothing concrete to get hold of or believe in. Image was piled upon image, frenzy upon frenzy, till finally the hero had a fit with Billie Holiday singing *Loveless Love* in the background and suddenly there beside him on the wall was Masaccio's *Expulsion from Eden* life-size. A collage like that is not film as art or film as entertainment: it is film as commercial—the commodity, Tragedy. And I'm afraid that finally *Modesty Blaise,* in spite of its charms, is a commercial for Camp.

David Sylvester

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The Darkness of Practical Reason

By Iris Murdoch

IN HIS BOOK *Freedom of the Individual*[1] Stuart Hampshire argues as follows. In human beings (as opposed to things) power is a function of will and will is a function of desire. Some desires are "thought-dependent" in that they depend on statable beliefs which, if they altered, would alter the desires, and so such desires cannot be defined by purely behavioural criteria, since the subject's conception of what he wants is constitutive of the wanting. We do not discover our thought-dependent desires inductively, by observation, we formulate them in the light of our beliefs. We have the experience of being convinced by evidence and of changing our beliefs and so willing differently, and there seems to be no set of sufficient conditions outside our thinking which could explain this situation equally well.

Here Hampshire pauses to deal with two matters which could be sources of confusion: "the doctrine of the transcendent will" and Aristotle's problem of *Akrasia* (weakness of will, *video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*). The doctrine of the transcendent will (forms of which Hampshire attributes to Kant, Schopenhauer, and Wittgenstein) presents freedom as an "ideal" movement of thought which does not "factually" occasion conduct, since the domain of value is entirely separate from the domain of empirical fact. Hampshire objects to such a view because it gives no coherent account of ordinary intentional acts, of the relation of will to ordinary felt desires, and of ordinary assessments of conduct. He concludes that we may return to "the attempts and tryings which are recorded in our ordinary speech" and "the desires and interests that explain them."

Hampshire agrees with Aristotle in finding *Akrasia* a paradox. Can one "really intend" what one believes to be mistaken? He argues that intentions and beliefs must at least have plausibility if they are to be properly so called. Believing, unlike fearing or wanting, has a built-in (normative) assertion of the appropriateness of its object. Believing and intending are active states, whereas desires and fears, unless they depend on beliefs, are passive states. Self-alteration by "techniques" is confined to the latter and only here can we use scientific knowledge. (Getting rid of irrational fears is not like changing one's mind by argument.) Science simply gives us information about the limits of our powers, and it makes no difference whether this information is physical or psychological. Increase in such knowledge does not limit freedom, since the subject can always "step back" to survey the situation anew in the light of the knowledge; and in general the more we learn of the conditions in which we act the closer the relation will be between intention and achievement. These distinctions between active and passive, intention and induction, normative and observed, beliefs and superstitions, decisions and wishes, are built into our language and are the material of our freedom. A man is free in so far as he is able to "step back" from his data, including his own mind, and so to achieve what he intends.

I WISH TO MAKE an entry into Professor Hampshire's argument at the point where he dismisses the doctrine of the transcendent will. This doctrine (its forms are very various) is one response to a very old problem in moral philosophy: how is human freedom compatible with the authority of the Good? Definitions and revelations of the Good seem to preclude the spiritual value of a

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[1] *Freedom of the Individual.* By STUART HAMPSHIRE. Chatto & Windus, 25s.

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free adherence. Kant inaugurates a new era when he makes a virtue out of this difficulty by pointing out that it is the very mysteriousness and separateness of the spiritual world which renders it spiritual. God (or value) is necessarily an object of faith, not of knowledge. Kant's combination of this insight with his confidence in science produces the dualism which shocks Hampshire. Since we are not just free spirits but also causally determined animals we are not transparent to ourselves and our motivation is both obscure and surprising. (We cannot easily determine beforehand how far idealism may extend our possibilities and how far we may be able to act against our character.) Much modern philosophy (existentialist and analytical) follows Kant here: since value has clearly no place in the empirical (scientific) world it must be given another kind of importance by being attached directly to the operation of the human will. (Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* is the modern classic of this type of empiricism: though I would not myself attribute any quasi-existentialist theory of the will to Wittgenstein. His exasperating hints seem to lead in a different direction.)

Now it is not easy to see at first sight why Hampshire rejects *in toto* this pregnant and various "doctrine of the transcendent will," since he himself holds, as I shall argue, a view which is a version of this same doctrine. However I think there is a particular feature of the doctrine which Hampshire finds menacing, and this is that it may portray (this is certainly true of Kant and the existentialists) human motivation as mysterious:

> If one dismisses the transcendent will, we are left with the attempts and tryings which are recorded in our ordinary speech, and embodied in action, and with the desires and interests that explain them.

It is for the same reason that Hampshire follows Aristotle in trying to remove the obscurity from the *Akrasia* situation by dividing it up into various cases which do not include the puzzling central one of really judging *A* better and doing *B*.

IT IS IMPORTANT to Hampshire's argument that we should be able cleanly to separate willing from believing (a genuine belief is not willed, it is formulated on evidence) and be able to discuss thought-dependent motivation in ordinary public language, free of personal or technical jargon. His distinction of passive from active mind is, although he allows for borderline cases, a dualism as strict as Kant's (and its close relation), and his picture of the formulation of belief in ordinary language and of motivation as a function of ordinary statable interests is intended to exclude from the active area not only any metaphysical or religious view of the mind (for instance, the operation of grace) but also any specialised psychological view.

Recall the structure of his argument. Will depends on desires, some of which depend on beliefs, which depend on thinking which is active and has built-in norms. Science deals with passive mind, and increases in scientific knowledge can be dominated by the agent's "stepping back" to review the situation. Freedom is a matter of being realistic enough (holding rational enough beliefs) to be able to achieve what we intend. It is the normative (objective, impersonal, unwilled) nature of the formulation of belief which rescues the active (uncaused) side of the mind from its passive (caused) side. And to be able to picture the desires which affect the will as being intelligibly connected with rational norms of belief we must eschew mysterious theories of motivation and allow ordinary public language to be adequate to explain our acts in terms of our statable wants and interests.

Let me try to clarify my objections to this view. The argument depends on the purity of the two dualisms: active and passive, and (within the former) reason and will. Motivation must be explicable in "ordinary language" (a phenomenon, indeed a *character,* often mentioned in the book) if we are to be able to see transparently the mechanism which connects reason (the formulation of sensible beliefs) with will and allows of the "stepping back" movement. Hampshire permits no machinery in between the passive states, which he surrenders to empirical psychology, and the active disengaged states which manufacture the free will as he sees it (surely transcendent enough). If there is any murky area of motivation which essentially (and apart from trivial borderline cases) blurs this distinction then the whole argument is damaged.

Hampshire, who is well known to be no enemy of Freud, mentions this name only once in the book, where he says that if a man were to accept a psychological explanation of a fear, "unless the explanation were a Freudian one, it would give him no place as endorsing, and as responsible for, his fear." The implication is that a Freudian explanation enables us to attach the fear intelligibly to a more clearly seen structure of motivation which we may endorse or at any rate accept as ours: the explanation is then *ipso facto* a "stepping back" movement and so can be recruited on to the active side of reason (becomes a part of reason); whereas all other psychological techniques illuminate not reason itself, but the merely passive aspects of mind.

These are large assumptions. It is arguable that psychological methods (such as Freudian

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methods) which depend on the co-operation and assent of the patient are differently situated from methods which do not have this dependence. But what is the status of the patient's assent (appropriation)? Is it, plus perhaps a therapeutic effect, the only possible verification of any theory which professes to explain our higher (rational) activities? It is at least (especially given the great variety of such theories: Freud, Marx) not obvious without more argument than Hampshire offers (in fact he offers none) that this is so, or that a given theory can always either be dominated by a stepping back movement or be regarded as such a movement. One can only step back if there is somewhere to step back to. If one allows these doubts the purity of the dualism is essentially blurred and the murkiness of the passive invades the active to an indefinite extent. This point, which would need much more discussion, I leave here.

WHAT I MAINLY WANT to argue is trickier. Hampshire himself uses the strict value-fact dualism which he attributes to the transcendent will merchants, only he draws his line so as to isolate, not value as such, but simply the value of freedom. His system (like most existentialist systems) implies two levels of value. There is the primary value of freedom itself and there are the secondary values which consist of the things chosen. Hampshire does not concern himself with the secondary values. He implies that freedom is an achievement, but a fairly simple and intelligible achievement, since the drama of attempt and motivation is something "recorded in our ordinary language." The failure to be free is the failure to operate the machinery of will-desire-belief-reason in such a way as to enjoy the detachment of rational thought. It is that failure and not any more complicated moral failure.

I think in an almost liberal political sense Hampshire would make a merit of these limitations. Freedom, he would say, is how you choose, not what you choose, doing what you intend, not doing what is right. I agree with Hampshire that any definition of freedom must be normative, but it seems to me that the norms involved are more complicated than those to which he appeals; and I do not think that a moral (*as opposed to a purely political*) definition of freedom can successfully separate the two levels of value.

It is significant that Hampshire relegates *imagination* to the passive side of the mind, regarding it as an isolated non-responsible faculty which makes potentially valuable discoveries which reason may inspect and adopt. Hampshire certainly regards imagination as a side issue. It is not even mentioned in his main argument. Why? Philosophical discussion is often obscure because philosophers invent (and have to invent) a limited vocabulary of systematically related terms. The critical reader must not only follow the argument but also scrutinise the assumptions carried by the vocabulary. Hampshire uses words such as "will," "desire," and "reason," and by-passes "imagination" because this word may be used to name an activity which is awkward for his theory. What is this activity?

Hampshire implies that "imaginings" are just drifting ideas. I should like to use the word (in a sense more like its normal one) to describe something which we all *do* a great deal of the time. This activity, which may be characterised by a contrast with "strict" or "scientific" thinking, is (like so many totally familiar things) not easy to describe, but one might attempt a description as follows: a type of reflection on people, events, etc., which builds detail, adds colour, conjures up possibilities in ways which go beyond what could be said to be strictly factual. When this activity is thought to be bad it is sometimes called "fantasy" or "wishful thinking." That we are all constantly engaged in this activity is something which Hampshire chooses to ignore, and he selects his vocabulary accordingly.

Now Hampshire might say that imagination, if thought to be important, should be seen simply as a passive condition which may impede freedom by making thinking unrealistic. (Recall that Hampshire connects rational thought with doing what we intend, *i.e.*, being free, by assuming that we will not achieve what we intend unless our beliefs are realistic.) That imagination (or "fantasy," meaning "bad imagining") may do this is plain: to reflect on an enemy solely in terms of revenge fantasies is not only wrong but likely to cloud the judgment. But should this great human activity be thought of only in these terms? Is there not also a good constructive imagination which plays an important part in our life? Hampshire would be unwilling to allow this for a rather important reason. He can readily admit imaginings which are unwilled, isolated, passive. But if we admit active imagination as an important faculty it is difficult not to see this as an exercise of will. Imagining is *doing*, it is a sort of personal exploring. Now Hampshire's picture depends on a divorce between will and reason (he considers the influence of will upon belief at the level of a man forcing himself to believe in his Leader against his better judgment, that is, it is always improper). Our freedom is said to consist in our ability to remove ourselves into a region where we can assess situations under no pressure from the will.

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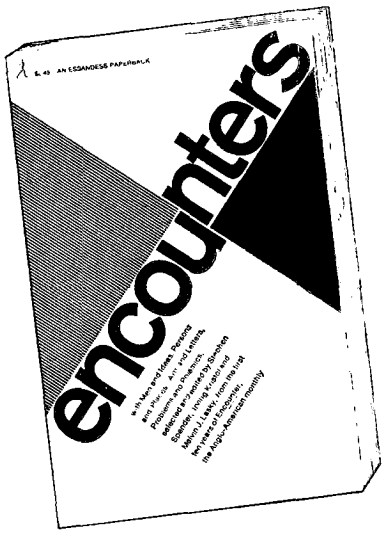

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Is Hampshire's neglect of imagination merely a slip which he could remedy without damage to his argument? I do not think so.

The world which we confront is not just a world of "facts" but a world upon which our imagination has, at any given moment, already worked; and although such working may often be "fantasy" and may constitute a barrier to our seeing "what is really there," this is not necessarily so. Many of the beliefs which are relevant to action are unlike disciplined scientific or scholarly beliefs. They are beliefs in the genesis of which active imagination and will play a part which is not necessarily sinister. The formulation of beliefs about other people often proceeds and must proceed imaginatively and under a direct pressure of will. We have to *attend* to people, we may have to have *faith* in them, and here justice and realism may demand the inhibition of certain pictures, the promotion of others. Each of us lives and chooses within a partly private, partly fabricated world, and although any particular belief might be shown to be "merely fantastic" it is false to suggest that we could, even in principle, "purge" the world we confront of these personal elements. Nor is there any reason why we should. To be a human being is to know more than one can prove, to conceive of a reality which goes "beyond the facts" in these familiar and natural ways.

This activity is, moreover, usually and often inevitably, an activity of evaluation. We evaluate not only by intentions, decisions, choices (the events Hampshire describes), but also, and largely, by the constant quiet work of attention and imagination. The image here is not so much that of a body moving (Hampshire's image) but rather of a sort of seeping of colour, or the setting up of a magnetic field. When moments of decision arrive we see and are attracted by the world we have already (partly) made. That is why "attempts and tryings recorded in ordinary language" (public language) may be inadequate to explain the mysteries of motivation. (Even Hampshire admits that it may be difficult to reproduce a man's unstated beliefs.) This is also (I think) the explanation of *Akrasia*: *Akrasia* is only a paradox if we assume (with Aristotle) that we really desire the good, or (with Hampshire) that we are really rational, that is readily able to become detached and have motives available for inspection in public language. But the good and evil that we dream of may be more incarnate than we realise in the world within which we choose. This too is why (as the existentialists point out but leave unintelligible) deliberation at the moment of choice often seems ineffectual. We are obscure to ourselves because the world we see already contains our values and we may not be aware of the slow

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delicate processes of imagination and will which have put those values there. This implies, of course, that at moments of choice we are normally less free than Hampshire pictures us as (potentially) being, and that freedom is a more difficult and complex achievement than Hampshire suggests.

THIS IS NOT, of course, to say that the picture offered by Hampshire is unrealistic in all cases. One might grant that the unwilled detachment which he regards as essential to freedom can occur in practical situations; though it seems to me untypical of our most important moral decisions and it would be hard to determine in any particular case that its background was not already "tainted" by will. But it is true that "we know what it is like to be convinced by evidence"; this knowledge is one of our most important characteristics, and if Hampshire had claimed to be producing *an* argument against determinism (and not a complete "phenomenology of freedom") his description of the mind, captioned "this sometimes happens," could constitute an up-to-date (post-Wittgenstein) version of the "argument from rationality."

If what Hampshire describes ever happens then we are potentially free in one, though not to my mind the most important, sense of "free." That is, we have a capacity for rational detachment in our decisions; though this would not, in my view, be a guarantee of freedom except in cases where efforts of imagination and will were not, as it happens, also required by the situation. I think Hampshire is right to say that what makes determinism not just unproved but unthinkable is the difficulty of conceiving any total translation of the normative language involved in describing free behaviour into a neutral language of natural law; and I would myself rely on such an argument, though the norms I would refer to are different from those of Hampshire. Meanwhile, empirical psychology can show what it can show.

I HAVE BEEN arguing that Hampshire's sharp distinctions of active and passive, reason and will, break down because a constructive activity of imagination and attention "introduces" value into the world which we confront. We have already partly willed our world when we come to look at it; and we must admit moral responsibility for this "fabricated" world, however difficult it may be to control the process of fabrication. *On such a view it will be impossible to separate "pure freedom" as a value untouched by secondary values.* That reality goes beyond "mere fact" and that to reach it we need strength and refinement of the imagination is not an obscure metaphysical doctrine. Consider any case of knowing another person really well or appreciating a great work of art. And if many of our important beliefs are and have to be products of a willed attention, then realism about the world is seen to require qualities of character (virtues) other than a professedly neutral and simple ability for detached thought. Political freedom may, and indeed should, be defined in terms which exclude questions of realism or meritorious choice. But as Hume wisely remarked, "something may be true in politics which is false in fact." Moral freedom, if it is to be defined at all, cannot, it seems to me, be defined without a reference to virtue. A mediocre man who achieves what he intends is not the ideal of a free man. To be free is something like this: to exist sanely without fear and to perceive what is real. I would be prepared to imply that one who perceives what is real will also act rightly. If the magnetic field is right our movements within it will tend to be right.

Hampshire sees the enemy of freedom in what he regards as the sinister influence of will upon belief, the tainting of reason. I would see the enemy of freedom as fantasy, a bad use of imagination: something relentlessly natural to human beings and against which "pure reason" has little chance. There must also be a willed imaginative reaching out towards what is real.

This is of course to pose a problem, not to solve it. The question of the authority of the Good (which engendered the doctrine of the transcendent will) remains, and must penetrate any ideal theory of freedom. How we picture the realism of the free (if they exist) will be a function of what in general we take to be valuable and real. I would suggest, however, that there is one region in which agreement might be sought. Surely great artists are (in respect of their art) free men. Ethics and aesthetics are not one, but art is the great *clue* to morals.

Yeats & Facts

An Honoured Guest: New Essays on W. B. Yeats. Edited by DENIS DONOGHUE and J. R. MULRYNE. *Edward Arnold,* 30s.

W. B. Yeats 1865–1965: Centenary Essays. Edited by D. E. S. MAXWELL and S. B. BUSHRUI. *Ibadan University Press,* 35s.

The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W. B. Yeats. Edited by RUSSELL K. ALSPACH. *Macmillan,* £12 12s.

PEAHENS do not dance. A critic was being difficult about Yeats' line ("*The peahens dance on a smooth lawn*"), and the poet retorted grandly: "As to the poultry yards, with them I

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have no concern." A trivial example, but it goes directly to the heart of the debate about Yeats: did he have no concern with the poultry yards of life? Is the presence or lack of such concern responsible for his having written well or badly? (As with Milton, there are enough fierce instances of good and bad verse to make the critical argument a vital and unending one.) "The impressiveness of a human utterance rather than a fashioned artifact"—Donald Davie's way of praising "*Easter 1916*" is one which implies that elsewhere in Yeats we sometimes sense that art is at odds with humanity. "The reek of the human," the stuff of life, facts, circumstance, history—are these only aerially there in Yeats' poems, so that the victories for the human imagination, for spirit and form, are too easily won?

It would be wrong to put too much weight on those peahens, but it is relevant that Tennyson—the Victorian with whom Yeats has the closest affinities—should have felt so differently about matters of fact. Edward FitzGerald reports that Tennyson would not print "*Anacaona*" because it "would be confuted by some Midshipman who had been in Hayti latitudes and knew better about Tropical Vegetable and Animal." For Tennyson, knowing better about such things gave you not only the power but the right to confute a poem. Though Tennyson is a more naked poet than Yeats (he had visions, but he did not have *A Vision*), with him too we feel precisely that admiring unease which all but Yeatsians feel in reading Yeats. To Whitman, "Tennyson shows more than any poet I know (perhaps has been a warning to me) how much there is in finest verbalism." The excellence of the essays in *An Honoured Guest* comes from their taking an analogous "warning" altogether seriously—the contributors argue about Yeats' greatness, they do not merely assert or deny it.

Not *too* honoured a guest, in fact. The tone and methods are freshly remote both from the panegyric of R. P. Blackmur (for whom Yeats was "the greatest poet since the 17th century"), and from the obloquy of Yvor Winters (on the last stanza of "*Among School Children*": "The diction in these lines is abominable: the first two lines are bad enough, but the third and fourth are as bad as Keats' '*Here where men sit and hear each other groan*'..."). Still, to mention Winters is to be reminded that there is a long tradition of coolness towards Yeats. In varying degrees and at various times, fault has been found with Yeats by men like T. S. Eliot, F. R. Leavis, F. W. Bateson, L. C. Knights, Arthur Mizener, and Winters. It is not that we have to side with such authorities—there are counter-

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authorities, and anyway what is authority in literary criticism? It is rather that *An Honoured Guest* takes seriously, in an unexpected way, the fact that Yeats' poems have seemed to unstupid men to be open to objection.

To take four of the central essays. Donald Davie has a firm and subtle investigation of the dangerous relationship between Yeats the poet and Yeats the commentator on his own poems. For John Holloway, Yeats' poetry is great just because it is poetry of *fiat,* determinedly calling up and creating rather than describing and exploring; without belittling other kinds of poetry, Mr. Holloway gives the best justification known to me of why and how such poetry matters. Yet in the next essay Denis Donoghue argues most persuasively that the greatness of Yeats is very much a matter of his not only incorporating but preferring the indissoluble particulars of life, of time and place. For Mr. Donoghue, "what we hear in *The Winding Stair* is a man beating upon a wall," and the wall does not owe its existence to any *fiat* by Yeats. Indeed, something goes wrong when Yeats, like his swan, takes flight:

> *Another emblem there! That stormy white*
> *But seems a concentration of the sky.*

"And for the present he is more interested in self-exalting emblems than in swans." Mr. Donoghue's first-rate essay clearly thinks it more important to be interested in swans, at least to begin with.

He is followed by J. R. Mulryne on *Last Poems,* attempting to pin down the way in which Yeats "transforms" the real men and women whom he mythologises and yet without treating them as belonging to him alone and not to real life. Mr. Mulryne brings out the extent to which Yeats' vocabulary of stone and sculpture is shot through with a humanising disaffection for such stoniness (an analogy might be Keats' "cold pastoral"), but he concedes that too often in late Yeats there are signs of impoverishment: "To detach the poetic sensibility from painful circumstance makes for a poverty that cannot be compensated by any merely declaratory security." In those poems we are given a cosmology, not a cosmos—or, in Yeats' own metaphor, the map has not become a country. Northrop Frye, in a witty and most lucid account of *A Vision,* grants that sometimes we have to apply to Yeats what Yeats said of Shelley: "Great as Shelley is, those theories about the coming changes of the world, which he has built up with so much elaborate passion, hurry him from life continually."

YET DESPITE THE UNUSUAL and valuable scepticism in *An Honoured Guest,* it remains a question whether or not Yeats had too little respect for, or sense of, fact. His appreciators tend to be rather good-humoured about it all. Even Ian Fletcher, very much more discriminating than most, can quote for our approval ("style itself rebukes") a disparagement by Yeats of George Eliot, and then bundle into a mere parenthesis the admission that "(The experience has perhaps little to do finally with George Eliot)." But George Eliot was an insistently important writer to Yeats, as innumerable comments bring out, and why is it irrelevant to our sense of the quality of his mind and heart that he so misrepresents and misunderstands her? The unfeeling coarseness with which he dismissed Wilfred Owen is a more notorious example. Yeats' noble aspiration to hold in a single thought reality and justice (an aspiration which elicits some of Mr. Donoghue's best criticism) surely demands some respect for a just understanding of others. It is a narrow line that separates a desirable self-quarrelling from an indurated self-absorption, and Yeats' witticism about George Moore—"He never kisses and always tells"—could be turned tellingly against much in Yeats' own writing.

It is the same with his evocation of Ireland's past—would not the poems be better if what they said about the past were true? In *Centenary Essays,* Mr. Fletcher's other essay (on "Yeats and Lissadell") speaks of Yeats' picture of "security in a rooted order": "That this is a political and economic falsity; that the 'Ascendancy' had been for twenty years or more the West British equivalent of the Algerian French, is irrelevant." Why? Yeats' poem may indeed survive such a falsity, but what are we saying about a poem when we insist that, although it quite explicitly calls up the past, the historical truth about that past is somehow "irrelevant?" Is it that to enjoy this side of Yeats we must leave outside the poem not only conscience but fact? Great poetry would surely not exacerbate but heal such academic schizophrenia (the critic, in Conor Cruise O'Brien's phrase, "cosmically concerned and terrestrially calm").

Yeats wishes to set Goldsmith to work in his poem—then let him call up the true Goldsmith, not "Goldsmith deliberately sipping at the honey-pot of his mind." From the past of Ireland are deduced many things about the way we live now; why is it then irrelevant that such a past never existed? There must surely be limits to what even Yeats' *fiat* may decently effect. Mr. Fletcher writes movingly about the last years of Constance Markiewicz, "living in the slums of Dublin, working for the humblest poor not as great lady or as politician, but as one who had identified herself with them in a spirit of quiet humility." And yet he can

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continue, only slightly troubled: "Yeats' lines: *Dragging out lonely years/Conspiring among the ignorant* may do her mythical violence, but. . . ." Yet if Yeats is falsifying and belittling Constance, why does that not in any way matter? How much of what is usually held to constitute greatness in a writer do we have to hand away when we waive such relevance? It is hard to see why we should avert our eyes from those pieces of evidence which call in question whether Yeats had a heart which was at all the equal of his finest verbalism.

Moreover this expands into the still unsettled and unsettling matter of Yeats' politics and snobberies. What is disturbing there is not that from the past one can pluck words which would better have been left unsaid, but that Yeats' admirers positively proffer such words for us. There is such a thing as a conservatism of dignity, and there is Yeats' unthinkingness:

> In its early days some old banker or lawyer would dominate the House, leaning upon the back of the chair in front, always speaking with undisturbed self-possession as at some table in a board room: My imagination sets up against him some typical elected man, emotional as a youthful chimpanzee, hot and vague, always disturbed, always hating something or other.

Why should we admire that, with its imprudent scorn for the "hot and vague"? B. A. King offers for our admiration ("like Swift") the heartless snobbery of: "Nothing that he can do or say will make us forget that he is Mr. Robinson the bank clerk, and that the toes of his boots turn upwards." The heart's grown brutal from the fare—the poet who learned that insight learned it in a flash of self-understanding.

NOR CAN THE DEBATE about Yeats' verbalism ever be at an end. The best piece in *Centenary Essays* is a patient, persistent and imaginative analysis by MacDonald Emslie of exactly how Yeats uses diction—an analysis which does full justice to the great things in Yeats precisely because it shows that his mature manner was quite as much in danger of settling into gestures of rote as ever his gauzy earlier manner had been. Such discriminations ought to inaugurate an argument, slower-paced than hitherto, about all those moments in Yeats which have been praised or dismissed unexplained. Is the line "*What made us dream that he could comb grey hair?*" an effective periphrasis for "that he could grow old"? Does anything hold at bay the ludicrous suggestion of a barber, especially as Major Gregory has just been described as "soldier, scholar, horseman"? Such a line is surely neither self-evidently good nor self-evidently bad—the value of such criticism as

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Mr. Emslie's is that it therefore deigns to give reasons.

Postscript. The Yeatsians can be proud of themselves; their devotion has made Yeats the best documented 20th-century poet. To his edition of the poems, Russell K. Alspach has now added a complete edition of the plays, with variant readings. Necessarily ungainly and even ugly in the intricacies of its collation, it is an indispensable work of Yeatsian scholarship. Such dedication might even have made Yeats regret his easy scorn for "the Scholars."

Christopher Ricks

Making de White Boss Frown

By Anthony Burgess

SENTIMENTAL and didactic, sub-Dickens with the American South as one big Dotheboys Hall (though no satisfying thrashing of Squeers-Legree), *Uncle Tom's Cabin*[1] expended its ration of serious attention in its own day, leaving the slush and not the anger for posterity. That is the general view, at least in England. American organs like the *Bulletin of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio* can produce scholarly papers like "Eliza Crossing the Ice—A Reappraisal of Sources," and students of the Civil War—like Edmund Wilson in *Patriotic Gore*—accord it the attention due to any book that helped to change history. Only in the USSR, whose bookshops parade it next to *Three Men in a Boat*, *Hatter's Castle*, and the novels of Messrs. Braine and Sillitoe, is it still purveyed as a piece of literary socialist realism, a device of confirmation. But, if we are to take seriously the literature of the South, from Mark Twain to Faulkner, and if we are to accept that our own age shows the true flowering of the novel of protest, we cannot afford to neglect Mrs. Stowe, who was the mother of both.

"The little woman who made this great war"—so proudly she was hailed by President Lincoln in 1862. She didn't, in fact, quite make it, but she made it possible for the making of it to seem the only way out of the North-South impasse. First serialised in the abolitionist *National Era*, her masterpiece came out as a book in 1852, two years after the Compromise which satisfied no one but held off war for a decade. Though California entered the Union as a free state, that Compromise did not expressly forbid the extension of Negro slavery to the territories gained from the Mexican War, but neither did it condone expansion of so lucrative a trade and so restful an institution. Southern acceptance of the Compromise depended on how far the North was willing to enforce the Fugitive Slave Law: men north of the Ohio had to dull their consciences to keep the peace and the Union. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* appeared as a whetstone; it did not argue, it showed. There was the brilliantly articulate escaped slave George, prototype of James Baldwin but far handsomer and not so black: walnut-juiced to temper the Euro-African yellow, he could be taken, in his Italianate cloak and with his brace of pistols, as some Byronic rebel wholly acceptable to the ladies' reading circles of Concord; there was his wife Eliza, palely beautiful with a beautiful child, running, by God's grace, over the ice-blocks of the Ohio. No more sympathetic refugees could well be imagined. Southern readers picked up a Scott-looking romance ("Late in the afternoon of a chilly day in February, two gentlemen were sitting alone over their wine, in a well-furnished dining parlour, in the town of P—, in Kentucky") and found that what they had there was a bitter attack on a constitutional right; their anger helped to sell three hundred thousand copies of the American edition in the first year alone. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* helped to start the crumbling of the 1850 Compromise and to show that no further one was possible. In that sense it did what Lincoln claimed it did.

Apart from a literary style that recalls (and probably influenced) the phthisic Sunday-school prizes which reconciled working-class children to malnutrition and a premature transfiguration, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* has been chiefly neglected—in our own age—because it is hard to accept that an instrument of historical change should also be a work of art. The Victorian men of letters who were also liberals had to swallow *Uncle Tom's Cabin* whole without meanly regurgitating the style. But the book's popularity soon made it possible to discount the

[1] *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. By HARRIET BEECHER STOWE. Edited by John A. Woods. Oxford University Press, 21s.

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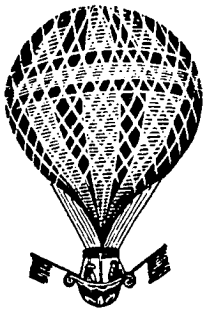
literary content altogether. It was eaten in fragments—tract-abridgements, school-selections, dramatic adaptations. As a barnstorming melodrama on tour (little Eva dragged heavenwards on a pulley), as a silent film (accompanied by the tunes of Stephen Foster), it held a large public till late in the nineteen-twenties. Even in Catholic Lancashire, where I was brought up, it was part of the pop-art of childhood, though the Church had placed it on the *Index* and enfranchisement had raised the price of cotton in our grandfathers' hard times. The vitality of the work is considerable. It survived its debasement as a bogus Siamese *wayang* in *The King and I*, recalling that Anna Leonowens had written to Mrs. Stowe about the Lady Sonn Klean's liberating all her slaves, saying: "I am wishful to be good like Harriet Beecher Stowe, and never again to buy human bodies, but only to let them go free once more." Now, it seems, we have to take the whole book again, since there is little relevant to our age that can be taken out of it. Today's Negroes, who reject martyrdom and intend to overcome, are ashamed of bible-thumbing Uncle Tom; George Harris, prophet of a vital Africa, has become a demagogue with two gold Cadillacs. If the book is to mean anything now, a good deal of the meaning must reside in the art.

READING IT, WE FIND that all we have to forgive is the style. This is an un-American activity, a cluster of fashionable importations—chiefly from Scott and Dickens, though, in the Simon Legree episodes, Mrs. Stowe draws on that earlier Gothic which continues, in more sophisticated forms, to exert its appeal for Americans. Structurally, the book is very sound, and it even has a visual skeleton provided by the geography of slavery. Kentucky is the middle earth, a vale of tears but with the Jordan-Ohio as its northern frontier, Canaan—Illinois, Indiana, or Ohio—on the other side. Then come the Great Lakes and the haven of Canada. George and Eliza make the journey and, in freedom, George is able to deliver a manifesto on the secular glory of a new Africa. "I go to Liberia," he says, "not as to an Elysium of romance, but as to *a field of work*." And Mrs. Stowe comments: "If we are not mistaken, the world will yet hear from him there." As for Uncle Tom, who has the other half of the story, his way lies south from Kentucky, down the Mississippi to the precarious earthly paradise of New Orleans, then north-west to martyrdom on the Red River. He has no Liberia to look forward to, only the Christian heaven.

What may look like self-indulgence frequently turns out to be structural necessity. The



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death of little Eva, whom Tom saved from drowning, thus earning a cushy billet with the St. Clare family, is usually picked out as the limit in slush: "A bright, a glorious smile passed over her face, and she said, brokenly,—'O! love,—joy,—peace!' gave one sigh and passed from death unto life!" But the image of a good Christian death is what sustains Tom when he is suffering not from phthisis but from Simon Legree. Lashed first to labour and at last to death, Tom needs Eva to keep him steady in belief and resolve, a sort of animated hagiograph. The sugar lilies and the weeping Topsy may be intolerable, but Mrs. Stowe makes up for that—Faulknerian realism begins here—with those protracted sufferings on the old plantation. There is, anyway, a balance, no gratuitous feeding (as so often in Dickens) of a necrophagous appetite. As for Tom's forgiving Christianity—"O, Mas'r! don't bring this great sin on your soul! It will hurt you more than 't will me! Do the worst you can, my troubles'll be over soon"—it doesn't deserve the sneers of the Negro intellectuals, or white ones either. What palliative ought a progressive slavery novel to make available to the victims of Legree —a bundle of abolitionist pamphlets, gems from Tom Paine? The visions of secular reform have always been the real pie in the sky; a man entering the gas chamber needs heaven. What may have disturbed Christians in Mrs. Stowe's own day—apart from cries like "Oh my country! these things are done under the shadow of thy laws! O, Christ, thy church sees them, almost in silence!"—is the implication that Christianity only really works as a slave religion.

Even in his hammiest postures as a slave with a soul, Tom is totally convincing. Indeed, all Mrs. Stowe's characters, who might well have been mere morality fascias, have a remarkable roundness—even the "good" master Shelby, whose implausible sale of Tom and Eliza's child sets the plot working. Her triumph is Augustine St. Clare, the indolent and indulgent New Orleans gentleman who lets his Negro butler bully him and Tom preach his hind leg off. Attractive as he is, Mrs. Stowe doesn't hide from us that his paternalism is as misguided as Legree's proprietorialism is vicious. St. Clare's slaves are, for the most part, a great deal happier than many a free-born white, but his free and easy welfare state cannot, and does not, survive his death in a café fracas. Tom has been promised his manumission (it is only a matter of asking), but the papers are still unsigned when St. Clare dies, and Tom is sold down the river. St. Clare has made the mistake of assuming that personal benevolence can turn bad law into good; but, in effect, good law comes to mean no law at all, and without law we are, however paternally coddled, wholly vulnerable. As for benevolence, that is precisely well-wishing, not acting. For all his weaknesses, St. Clare is a sort of voice of history; he knows perfectly well that the slave-owning mentality is not confined to the Southern States of America. How about the British labourer? His New England cousin, Miss Ophelia, will not have it that British factories are another kind of plantation: "The English labourer is not sold, traded, parted from his family, whipped." St. Clare replies:

> "He is as much at the will of his employer as if he were sold to him. The slave-owner can whip his refractory slave to death,—the capitalist can starve him to death. As to family security, it is hard to say which is the worst,—to have one's children sold, or see them starve to death at home."

American slavery is no more than

> the more bold and palpable infringement of human rights; actually buying a man up, like a horse,—looking at his teeth, cracking his joints, and trying his paces, and then paying down for him,—having speculators, breeders, traders, and brokers in human bodies and souls, —sets the thing before the eyes of the civilised world in a more tangible form, though the thing done be, after all, in its nature, the same; that is, appropriating one set of human beings to the use and improvement of another, without any regard to their own.

It is St. Clare, more than the Northern abolitionists, who sees that a *"dies irae"* is coming everywhere. Like any Marxist, he regards the process as ineluctable, but he is an aristocrat who calls himself a democrat and feels neither regret nor elation at the impending change in the order. He plays the *Dies Irae* from Mozart's *Requiem* on the piano, pushing back his very prophecy into an art that serves a religion he cannot accept, despite Tom's humble but importunate evangelising. It is as complex a portrait as any in 19th-century fiction.

Mrs. Stowe's resistance to the technique of the morality (a far stronger resistance than is evinced in much present-day protest literature —Baldwin's *Blues for Mister Charlie,* for instance) is attested by the divisions built into her characters. Miss Ophelia has a New Englander's abhorrence of Southern slavery, but also of the slackness, the reversion to tropical torpor, which her cousin's indulgence seems to encourage. She wants Negroes to be Christianised into the austere patterns of the North, educated and turned into free wage-earning

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Americans, but (and here her crime is, in its way, as great as that of the slave-owners) she cannot bear the touch of a black skin. Paradoxically, to be surrounded by slaves may be a means of accepting them as a sort of human beings; it will rarely—since these black bodies are your property—mean physical revulsion. The attitudinising of the North, the work of enlightenment delegated to missionaries, will not do; Miss Ophelia (whom the slaves, with prophetic insight, call Miss Feely) must learn to cherish dark flesh with her own hands. That is why Topsy is brought in, Miss Ophelia's own charge and passive, or resistant, educatrix; eventually she will be taken to New England as a living witness that Negroes are real touchable people.

The whole book sometimes seems to resolve itself into a protest, not just against slavery, but against the forces—law or prejudice—which destroy simple affection or break family ties. The real horror of slavery is that it separates mothers from their children: it is a horror that Mrs. Stowe, a bereaved mother, is qualified to express: no amount of abstract, diffused abhorrence of slavery—appropriate to a male writer—could have given *Uncle Tom's Cabin* its peculiar bitterness. And yet the book is far from being a mere monothematic exercise, and that is where much of its distinction lies. We are given a picture of mid-19th-century America which is as cosy as Mrs. Gaskell's England: tea is taken, chicken pie is cooked, the crinolined ladies are subject to the vapours, the calm legislative processes go on in the capital. But a system is accepted which is more than mere hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is allegiance to the letter and denial of the spirit; in the American South the letter itself has to admit ambiguous values. There are men and women to whom, since they are only chattels, Christian institutions cannot apply. One of the most sickening episodes in the book is the recollection of the marriage between George and Eliza, sentimentally arranged by Mrs. Shelby with all the bijou trimmings, presided over by a real clergyman. But this marriage can mean nothing, since slaves are sold as individual bodies: the slave family just does not exist. Mrs. Stowe will allow husbands to be separated from wives, but the wresting of a child from its mother cannot be tolerated by nature: the mother will kill herself, escape with her child (but only, as with Eliza, through a kind of miracle) or—improbably, as in the dénouement of the book—achieve reunion in freedom. It is through the disruption of nature that slavery is shown as not merely evil but mad.

Mrs. Stowe is prophetic in that she implies no real hope for the integration of the races in

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America. The future of the Negro lies in Africa, and the future of the world may lie there too:

> In that far-off mystic land of gold, and gems, and spices, and waving palms, and wondrous flowers, and miraculous fertility, will awake new forms of art, new styles of splendour; and the Negro race, no longer despised and trodden down, will, perhaps, show forth some of the latest and most magnificent revelations of human life. Certainly they will, in their gentleness, their lowly docility of heart, their aptitude to repose on a superior mind and rest on a higher power, their childlike simplicity of affection, and facility of forgiveness. . . . Perhaps, as God chasteneth whom he loveth, he hath chosen poor Africa in the furnace of affliction, to make her the highest and noblest in that kingdom which he will set up, when every other kingdom has been tried, and failed; for the first shall be last, and the last first.

It is straight from Revelations, the Holy City, with no tse-tse flies or dysentery; it's the other side of the Jordan, no more. Charles Dickens, for one, would not have it:

> I doubt there being any warrant for making out the African race to be a great race, or for supposing the future destinies of the world to lie in that direction; and I think this extreme championship likely to repel some useful sympathy and support.

And certainly, since only Uncle Tom looks "respectable enough to be a Bishop of Carthage" and only George Harris shows any intelligence, the rest of Mrs. Stowe's Negroes exhibiting few of the virtues of a God-chosen race, we find it hard to reconcile the prophet with the novelist.

It is the novelist who counts. Mrs. Stowe's primary gift to Southern fiction derives from an ability to take the Negro seriously as subject-matter, and to render—for the first time—the involutions of the Negro character through exact transcription of speech. Mrs. Shelby's Sam, sent out to "help this yer Mas'r to cotch Lizy," explains why he hindered instead:

> "Dat ar was *conscience,* Andy; when I thought of gwine arter Lizy, I railly spected Mas'r was sot dat way. When I found Missis was sot the contrar, dat ar was conscience *more yet*—cause fellers allers gets more by stickin' to Missis' side, —so yer see I's persistent either way, and sticks up to conscience, and holds on to principles. Yes, *principles,*" said Sam, giving an enthusiastic toss to a chicken's neck,—"what's principles good for, if we isn't persistent, I wanter know? Thar, Andy, you may have dat ar bone,—'tan't picked quite clean."

The speech is the speech of a whole tradition of fictional Negroes, not excluding film and music-hall, but the argument is that of the modern African politician. And here is the voice of modern Negro protest:

> "... What country have *I,* or any one like me, born of slave mothers? What laws are there for us? We don't make them,—we don't consent to them,—we have nothing to do with them; all they do for us is to crush us, and keep us down. Haven't I heard your Fourth-of-July speeches? Don't you tell us, once a year, that governments derive their just power from the consent of the governed? Can't a fellow *think,* that hears such things? Can't he put this and that together, and see what it comes to?"

It is the impact of the characters, and what they say, that excuses the frequent ineptitude of the *récit,* the hollow prophecies, and the tedious moralising. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* works well as fiction, but the fiction is also the feather of the dart. It has, whether we have read it or not, done more than any work of literature to make Negro servitude in the South seem not only the type of all slavery but the only one we ought to feel guilty about. We can forget what happened to the Jews, or what is still going on under Islam, or that a greater white novelist than Mrs. Stowe was a galley-slave. Thanks to her, colour has become for all time the colour of the oppressed.

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Mess & Mystery

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MR. AMIS is a moralist and moreover a tidy-minded moralist. He would like man—decent, honourable, normal man—to be the measure of all things. In his poems he expresses, from time to time, nostalgia for something like the eighteenth-century formal garden, planned and proportioned—a wish to inhabit "a temperate zone," "woods devoid of beasts, roads that please the foot," with the grass cut, no "torrid images," "grand meaning" or "havering unicorn" to please an "ingrown taste for anarchy." In *I Like It Here* the nostalgia extends to Fielding.

> How enviable to live in the world of his novels, where duty was plain, evil arose out of malevolence, and a starving wayfarer could be invited indoors without hesitation and without fear. Did that make it a simplified world? Perhaps, but that hardly mattered beside the existence of a moral seriousness that could be made apparent without the aid of evangelical puffing and blowing.

Mr. Amis does not like mystery, mess, or extravagance; he is tempted to deal with them as Lucky Jim dealt with the jagged hole he burned in the sheets—a pointlessly satisfactory tidying operation with a razor. Martin Green, in *Mirror for Anglo-Saxons,* extols this tidy-mindedness as typical of the "Anglo-Saxon moralist" whom his book sets out to praise:

> What is always essential is the puritanism, taking that to mean a concern with right and wrong so keen as to set the tone of the whole personality, an eagerness to draw sharp exclusive lines, mapping out as much as possible of the world, a distrust of all connoisseurship in experience, all aestheticism. The typical movement of this mind is scrupulous in bad ways as well as good, and therefore irritable as well as honourable.

It is a mind, essentially, not capable of "remaining in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts" without any "irritable reaching after fact and reason." Keats was referring to Coleridge's need for theological certitude. Mr. Amis' earlier irritability was confined to human folly; but in his last two books he has taken on God, and the problem of good and evil, as well. "Were it in my choice," Keats said, thinking of evil, "I would reject a petrarchal coronation—on account of my dying day and because women have cancers." In *The Anti-Death League* we have the irate literary moralist pondering on his dying day and the fact that women have cancers in a way that is both dignified and absurd.

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MACMILLAN

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In Kingsley Amis' earlier novels the enemy was human extravagance, mess, excess, in one form or another, and these were cut down to size and disposed of by the tidying and defensive techniques of mockery, parody, exposure by ridicule or imitation. In *Lucky Jim* the joke, the parody, the face-pulling, were the decent man's legitimate revenge on the indecent and extravagant bastards who oppressed him. Hatred was a good thing: Jim's hatred of his Professor is beautiful, Garnet Bowen's "awesome pall of hatred" for his mother-in-law provides much of his energy and his literary inspiration, such as it is, derives from the thought of the jokes he will play on her. But by *Take a Girl Like You* the practical joker is seen as in some way on the side of the sloppy, anarchic, sub-human, indecent, predatory aspects of life. And jokes are to do with death; Patrick Standish puts off his recurrent terror of his dying day with alternate thoughts of the seduction of Jenny Bunn and of elaborate sadistic and comic traps to be laid for Dick Thompson. His energy is produced by fear and has turned nasty. Death is "a shifting face in profile, the eye blinking slowly with idiotic humour" seen in the shrubbery. Jenny's moral decency objects, rightly, both to his throwing stones at the hens and to his shooting Dick in the bottom.

In *One Fat Englishman* the hero's attempts to reduce rational women to animals by sexual exploitation, and to destroy rivals with jokes, one-upmanship and rage are foiled by a much more ruthless joker, Irving Macher. Macher is the author of a novel about the horrible practical jokes it is possible to play on the defenceless blind, the Blinkies. He has achieved the logical and amoral view that "Human life is so horrible that the only thing is to do what you want. Any means are justifiable for getting what you want, up to and including murder." The fat Englishman makes various futile attempts to remonstrate with God, but the idea of God is barely approached in that novel.

So far Mr. Amis has seemed to be approaching a real novel in which anarchy and reason are at war in one complex character, as in Patrick. But *The Anti-Death League,* although it presents love as an antidote to destructive fear, and restores the dignity and sense of proportion to the human beings, does so by means of a retreat towards the literary tidiness of fable. God has replaced Macher; He is the sub-human joker responsible for death and excess—leukaemia, meaningless road accidents, catatonic states, limbless children and women's cancers. Hatred is again, partly at least, righteous indignation. None of the main characters plays serious jokes or does mean things. Savagery is abstract.

THE PLOT CONCERNS the preparations for Operation Apollo, a secret military operation destined to inflict death in a peculiarly horrible and dehumanising form on randomly selected Chinese Communists. The stress of this causes a kind of "mass hysteria" among the personnel of the installation. A decent but stupid young officer makes various ludicrous attempts to catch an unidentified spy; an insane psychiatrist treats everyone indiscriminately for repressed homosexuality; a widowed Lady Hazell practises promiscuous polyandry with gay abandon. Captain James Churchill falls in love with Catherine, who is released by his love from neurotic withdrawal and is made to feel the world is of value. There is a series of random, meaningless deaths and disasters, culminating in the discovery that Catherine has cancer of the breast. A joker puts up a series of protesting posters inviting people to join the "Anti-Death League and Human Beings Anonymous." He also writes a poem, jocular, savage and very effectively nasty, addressed by God to a child born without limbs. James diagnoses a "lethal node," a malign pattern of events:

> There are such things as patterns even when nobody willed them. Runs of bad luck. A system that runs itself is still a system. You don't have to believe in a weather god to find a climate unbearable.

Death is the evidence of what lies below right and wrong, distorts human actions, and makes innocence impossible. When Catherine tells him that people "get results" by the idea of God, he retorts like a true moralist, "only people with no sense of right and wrong." The nature of Operation Apollo itself is finally revealed in these terms: "Apollo was the Greek god of the sun and of music and of agriculture and other things. He was also the God of disease.... What James and the others have been training to do was spreading a plague in the Chinese army and probably in China too...." James is in turn reduced, by this concatenation of evils, to a state of complete neurotic withdrawal from which he is only rescued by the love of Catherine who tells him, in somewhat implausible circumstances, that the War Office is, after all, human and decent, that the horrors are not to be inflicted, that "You know very well that it's up to people not to get on with the bad things God has invented for them. It's their job to show they're better than he is. Well, now, here they are, doing it." This is an idea Kingsley Amis has already located in science fiction: a "human self-confidence," a faith in man's rational and moral ability to control the horrors produced by the non-human. Apollo may continue to spread plagues but his function as musician is

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arrogated to man. The (secretly atheist) chaplain sees his music as "the true embodiment of the unaided and self-constituted human spirit, the final proof of the non-existence of God." The end of the book is ambiguous, superbly timed, and sums up beautifully the relationship between human dignity and God's messy-joky nastiness. (It is a pity that it is critically wrong to reveal it and therefore to discuss it.)

THESE ARE THE TERMS in which Mr. Amis attempts his theological mopping-up. How successful is the novel? I found it both unsatisfactory, unreal, and at one remove curiously moving. It is very much a literary structure, a combination of various more or less allegorical modes: science fiction, spy fiction, burlesque spy fiction, military sociological fiction, bedroom farce, and the fairy story in which love is pure and perfect and a super-man descends from the sky in the nick of time to save the situation. The plot is intriguing but does not *matter*; the tensions and shocks are not created by the characters or events but by literary expectations and shifts from one mode to another. We know homosexuals are security risks; nice ones shouldn't be; therefore this one is not a spy; or is Amis bluffing? Is Dr. Best's behaviour, patently absurd for a man in his position, absurd because the convention allows it, because he is mad, because he is a spy, or all three? In precisely what way is Amis exploiting the traditional mental home near the army camp and its sinister hypodermics? It is all great fun and quite gripping enough—and if none of the characters is complicated enough to involve us, a surprisingly large number of them (the put-upon spy-catcher, the polyandrous lady, the gallant alcoholic) arouse that automatic pure affection we feel for the heroes of fairy tales and for Tom Jones.

But the novel is, in the last resort, formally too timid to engage the problems it raises. It is neither real enough nor allegorical enough. Mr. Amis is too humane to write a savage intellectual allegory about death-dealing—his human norm is Fielding's, warm and muddled, not Swift's hard and extreme rationality. His Operation Apollo is finally too flimsy a conception; Mr. Amis feels none of the unholy glee in the face of destruction that went into *Catch 22*. Equally, he is too restrained a writer—too anxious to deprecate, sum up, or mock his characters—to give their uncertainties and doubts enough urgency at the realistic level. His women remain sexual and moral *objects*, who tell their neatly digested life-histories to their gentle protectors. His men, finally, meet the mess and mystery with intellectual responses

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that are a little too pat and too rationally indignant. Cancer and meningitis cannot be disposed of, or even really approached, with literary formulae and throw-away humour. Dr. Best—a "really evil man"—can be demolished by mockery. Exaggeration of his psychological formulae shows up their inhumanity and one can enjoy the farcical extravaganza of his final destruction. But the facts of death and disease loom disproportionately large in the story or else appear unreal and meaningless in its context. They can't be tidied, though one can admire the qualities in Mr. Amis which lead him to attempt it.

A. S. Byatt

Walter Bagehot

The Collected Works of Walter Bagehot. Edited by NORMAN ST. JOHN-STEVAS. Vols One and Two. The Literary Essays. *The Economist.* 50s. each.

Bagehot's Historical Essays. Edited, with an Introduction by NORMAN ST. JOHN-STEVAS. *New York University Press.* $6.50.

I ONCE SENT a manuscript in which I had quoted a phrase of Bagehot's to a rather highbrow typing agency. It came back with the *e* in his name transposed to an *s*, and a curt note to the effect that they assumed the author was referring to Bagshot "since we know of no Bagehot." In the last two decades, however, a notable effort has been made to remind the world of the thought and achievements of the man whom G. M. Young called "*Victorianum maxime.*" Young's own essay on him was published in 1948 and in the past eight years there have been my own biography, Norman St. John-Stevas' edition of his political writings, and Richard Crossman's new edition of *The English Constitution.* Now comes *The Economist*'s noble piece of *pietas* towards its third editor, an edition of his collected works in eight volumes, to replace a very unsatisfactory one published by his sister-in-law some fifty years ago.

The difficulty with Bagehot is to see him whole, not because he was a voluminous writer, for Carlyle and Macaulay wrote even more, but because he combined several different lives within the short compass of his own. In addition to these literary essays he wrote a number of biographical essays which are among the finest in the language, and the best book on the operation of the British governmental system in his century; he was a great editor and he made two important contributions to economic and sociological thought; all this in a life span of fifty-one years. He created a new prose style in which English journalists and officials still write. He was also a kind and entertaining man who made a lasting impression upon those who met him. But there is probably less biographical material about him, in the shape of letters and journals, than any other significant figure of his time.

In consequence he is often misjudged. The different facets of his mind have been studied by different kinds of specialists, those with political, literary, economic, or sociological interests. And because there is no unifying abundance of personal detail, only the earnest student of his whole works appreciates the extraordinary complexity of Bagehot's mind. Literary people tend to find their Bagehot unsubtle, economists sometimes find theirs unscientific and too literary in his approach to economics, sociologists consider their man too harsh and political scientists not harsh enough in his analysis. This is the price that the reputation of a great and brilliant amateur pays to an age of specialisation, especially when the man himself can speak only through his writings rather than through the direct testimony of letters and personal papers.

Of the half dozen Bagehots who dwelt together for this short, and for the most part, happy life, the one who has made the deepest impression on me is the analyst of economic behaviour. He was the best sociological observer of his day, and he might still have a great reputation as a sociologist had not the foundations of sociological method altered so much in the past century. It is clear to me that the central ambition of his last years was to write a new *Wealth of Nations*, analysing the world into which his generation had moved, of big business, trade unions, economic nationalism and colonial protectionism. Had he been given another ten years I think his name would have dwarfed those of Mill, Marshall or Jevons and been set on the same level as that of Adam Smith or Maynard Keynes.

Bagehot's diversity has presented the editor of his collected works with a formidable problem: where to start. The right course would have been to publish the whole eight volumes simultaneously, exposing the reader to the full range of Bagehot's thought, but this may have been impractical. It was probably inevitable that Mr. St. John-Stevas should begin with the literary essays for they were mostly written in Bagehot's youth. The pity is that these two volumes may well attract more critical notice than the later ones, though they do not represent

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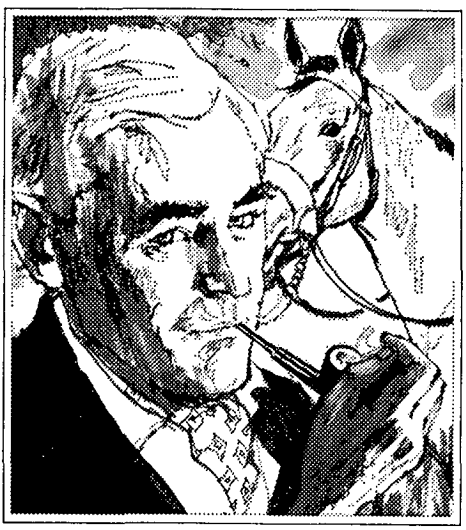

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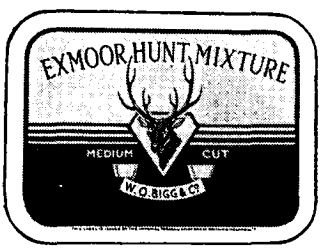

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the most interesting or the most fruitful side of his mind. He was not a critic in the sense that Matthew Arnold or Leslie Stephen were: he was a lover of poetry and novels until his mind began to concentrate on economic and political analysis in his forties.

This said, it should be acknowledged that Mr. St. John-Stevas has performed his task admirably. He has revised the texts of the literary essays from the conflicting muddle of previous editions. He has ferreted out two new essays which he is undoubtedly right in attributing to Bagehot: one on Bailey's *Festus*, written when he was twenty-one, and one on Tennyson's *Idylls*. He has contributed a short biography, which, though it reflects little in the way of new material, is lucid and a useful means of connecting the various Bagehots for the reader who is unfamiliar with them. And he has imported Sir William Haley to write an appreciation of the literary essays.

I CANNOT PRETEND to be an admirer of Sir William's colleague Oliver Edwards who seems to me to indulge in the most tedious forms of literary gamesmanship in his weekly column in *The Times*. But flying his own colours the editor of "The Thunderer" proves to be a perceptive critic. He points out what is not always appreciated by those who have read only the later Bagehot, that he was very far from being the downright practical man which was the impression he chose to leave with his contemporaries. His mother was mad, his marriage was fruitless, and his own nature was, in fact, imaginative and romantic though he chose to address himself largely to practical subjects like politics and money (though here too it is his imaginative powers that earned his reputation). Haley notes what others have noticed, the emphasis on poetry in Bagehot's choice of literary subjects. And he makes a point that I myself had missed but on which I am inclined to think he is right: though Bagehot's essay on Shelley is impatient with the poet's view of society, "Shelley was the one poet he never seemed to be able to get settled in his mind." Milton he could dissect; Tennyson he could appraise judiciously; Scott he could understand: Cowper, Haley thinks, eluded him (though I am not so sure). He could reject the social radicalism of Dickens because he could show to his own, and many other people's, satisfaction that it was quackery. But Shelley preyed on the introspective and uncertain side of his nature.

No one will want to read all the essays in these two volumes. The most brilliant is that on "Shakespeare—the Individual," still probably the best thing ever written on Shakespeare as a person. "The Waverley Novels" made a great stride forward in the appraisal of Scott. Haley points out that although Hazlitt has often been mentioned as having a great influence on Bagehot, "when Hazlitt is brought into the argument . . . there is an air of coldness. Bagehot's arm is always linked comfortably through Scott's." And for acid there is the essay on Macaulay: "he regards existing men as the painful prerequisites of great-grand-children. . . . There is something of the schoolboy about the Cavalier—there is somewhat of a schoolmaster about the historian." "An orator should never talk like an observatory."

But pick them up anywhere and they will tell you something about Bagehot: as Haley says, "a close and very understanding student of all Bagehot's other writings, including his letters, might be able to perceive most of the full man without the essays in these volumes. It would be an unnecessarily strenuous task and he would deprive himself of a great deal of enjoyment." I can think of no better justification for publishing them.

A NEW EDITION by Mr. St. John-Stevas, who has become the most indefatigable Bagehotist in the land, of his historical essays has also been

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published in the United States (and will be published in Britain by Dennis Dobson early next year). Here Bagehot the mystic, the man who was never quite sure about Shelley, disappears, and the man of assured pen and judgment enters. Here there is his famous first-hand and approving description of Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état* in 1851 which so shocked the editors of the nonconformist journal for which it was intended. His respectful treatment of Gladstone, "the most remarkable thing about Gladstone is his quantity," rides beside his mocking comments on Disraeli: "It has been Mr. Disraeli's misfortune throughout his main political career to lead a party of very strong prejudices and principles, without feeling himself any cordial sympathy with either one or the other." And there are his articles setting out his considered objections to the Second Reform Bill as outstripping the educated population of the country. (Quite why these contemporary comments count as historical essays is not clear.)

Then there are half a dozen of the superbly finished biographical portraits: Bolingbroke, Pitt, Brougham ("if he was a horse no one would buy him: with that eye no one could answer for his temper"), Cobden, Palmerston. Above all there is the essay on Peel, one of the best things Bagehot ever wrote and the most judicious assessment ever made of that brave, lonely, unattractive man, of whom O'Connell said that "his smile was like the silver plate on a coffin."

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Alastair Buchan

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POINTS OF THE COMPASS

From Dakar to Bamako

THE PLANE arrives at 5 a.m. The customs are slow and the forms to fill out vast, with nowhere to write or sit. The queue of passengers winds slowly along in a dream-like way. After it is all over I take a taxi into town, am charged huge quantities of French francs, but am too tired to care. Already a "typical smell" is dominant: a smell of vegetation and spices macerated in salt heat, the smell of a peppery human cauldron, in which the basic ingredient is the principal product of the country (ground-nuts magnified out of all comparison with the common cocktail peanut). But there are also undertones of kola masticated slowly and spat all over the place—*corsé*, enigmatic, nauseating. Through wide expanses of scrub the taxi sweeps into the centre of the city, into a big monumental square. Then to a hotel....

In the morning the city has the look of a Mediterranean town, all red roofs and provençal accents. But instead of sea-gulls there are kites, and the streets are full of the rainbow-coloured *boubous* and *pagnes* of the Senegalese, male and female. The men's robes are striped in various colours (do they have any significance?), while the women often wear cloths that look as if they should be decorating the walls of the bar at the Festival Hall, last year's Heal's patterns. They themselves are magnificent, straight-backed, with sharply pointed breasts and slim necks. What they do or do not wear has little importance: their quality of statues is within themselves—in the way they have of managing a succession of folds and then allowing the neck to emerge bearing the head's assurance.

All this is exoticism, but an inveterate European is bound to be sensitive to it. Too much of our appreciation of far places is based on a sort of pathetic fallacy by which we attribute to manners we fail to understand the strangeness we bring to them. But the strangeness is also real. It is only deceptive when it becomes the basis of a value judgment: "these people are better (because more natural) than us" or "these people are worse (because more primitive) than us." Arnold wrote that it is "by the humanity of their manners that men are made equal," but what if their manners are the real difficulty in communication?

LONG DISCUSSION with *X.* on Senegal and, in particular, on Moslem confraternities: the Mouridists and the Tidjanis. *X.* says that the whole political balance of the country depends on these clans and their influence: President Senghor sees *marabouts* from one or other of them almost every day. In a country which is in the majority Moslem, his Catholicism is a positive advantage since it enables him to arbitrate between Mouridist and Tidjani pretensions, whereas otherwise he would be committed to one or the other, and its rival would be hostile to him. These influences are powerful. One minister who has just changed his job in the government would have been put out altogether but for Mouridist support. The motto of the Mouridists is "Order, Work, and Discipline," and it seems that they have done a great deal for ground-nut cultivation. On the other hand, the plantations are worked by semi-serf share-croppers, and the *marabouts* try to prevent the installation of social services in the areas where they are influential (*e.g.*, in the Touba area only 14 per cent of the children go to school owing to *marabout* opposition). Government officials have therefore to negotiate with the local *marabouts* when they wish to carry out some project in their administrative region and are often very bitter about the interference they have to meet. Nobody seems to know how long these confraternities will retain their potency. The least one can say is that they are well dug in.[1]

OTHER Senegalese problems. The approaching end of the French ground-nut subsidy makes

THIS *is the first part of* ANTHONY HARTLEY'S *journey through the new African states of the former French "Afrique Noire."*

[1] In René Dumont's *L'Afrique noire est mal partie* (Paris, 1962) there is a striking picture of El Hadji Falilou M'Backé, the grand Khalifa of the Mouridists, extracting cash from the faithful. M. Dumont draws attention to the cost of the great mosque of Touba on which up to 1961 nearly two billion CFA francs (=4 billion old French francs) had been spent. Here the parallel with the activities of the church in the early Middle Ages is striking: the encouragement of economic activity and the use of the product for works of devotion. "Rural animation" has not been very successful in Africa so far, and it may be that the Mouridists with their religious dynamism and discipline have something. In his essential study *L'Islam Noir* (Paris, 1964) Professor Vincent Monteil gives a picture of them, which is by no means entirely negative, and quotes President Senghor at the inauguration of the mosque of Touba (June 10th, 1963) attacking "infantile leftism [that] presents our religious leaders as counter-revolutionaries."

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the diversification of Senegalese agriculture urgent.[2] But how to change habits that have existed from time immemorial and which imply a slower rhythm of life than alternative systems of cultivation? In the Casamance, the rice-growing province in the south, the farmers store rice harvests as a visible sign of wealth. Even when Dakar is short of rice and offering good prices, there is a reluctance to exchange the prestige of having two or three good harvests stacked away in one's granary for the dubious advantage of paper money. Senegal's economic plight is intractable. The inheritance that the new state received from the French when it became independent on June 20th, 1960, under the title of the Federation of Mali (which broke up into Senegal and Mali two months later) was a federal capital (Dakar) without a federation. Since *Afrique Occidentale Française* (*AOF*) no longer existed all the common services based on Dakar became useless, and jobs had to be found for the Senegalese officials employed in them. Hence President Senghor's speech on March 18th to the Economic and Social Council in which he said that there were five thousand officials too many in Senegal; it seems that the real figure is nearer ten. But what will these people do if they see their position threatened?

Dakar has obviously in the past been a boom town. Everywhere there are large office blocks, luxury shops, which sold everything from perfume to motor-boats and, on the edge of the town, expensive-looking villas and flats. Now this phase seems to be over. There is little building going on—even the *Place de l'Indépendance*, conceived on a monumental scale, is unfinished. (The atmosphere reminds me a little of Meknès in 1958. That was another French boom town for which capital suddenly ceased to be available.) The withdrawal of the majority of the French troops stationed in West Africa must mean less customers for the shops and restaurants, fewer takers for houses and flats. And the Senegalese themselves, though they may wish to live at a French standard of living, have not the money now and will have less in the future. The port of Dakar is stagnant. There is a curiously empty feeling about the town. Even the one or two beautiful whores patrolling the square (*"M'sieu, M'sieu, Voulez, M'sieu?"*) look as if they were pushed for clients.

[2] "In 1962 ground-nuts represented 77 per cent of Senegalese exports which were sold in France at 22 per cent above the world price: next year we shall base ourselves on the world price which represents a loss of profit of 6 million francs." (Léopold Sédar Senghor, in *Le Monde*, June 8th.)

LAST NIGHT, walking in the town, I saw a clothes shop called *"Saint-Germain des Prés."* A large part of colonialism consists in nostalgia. What is striking here is that the Senegalese élite shares that nostalgia. In India there is the cult of the blazer and drinks at six o'clock—in Dakar: "When I was a student in Paris...." Nothing obviously can be as nice again.

I TALK TO *S.*, a Senegalese writer and intellectual, who denounces *marabout* influence at some length. Nothing can be done if the *marabouts* say no. He admits, however, that the Catholics run a lobby too—notably in Upper Volta and the Ivory Coast. *S.* believes that West Africa must federate, since the small succession states are not viable economically or politically. Nigeria, the strongest of all and the only one with an interior market of a reasonable size, will industrialise and then "conquer" the rest—a consummation which, according to *S.*, would be no bad thing. "African unity," he says, "will be created through opposition between the different African regions." The advance which West Africa has over East Africa means that it may be the first part of the continent to adopt this method. On the Congo, *S.* thinks that the trouble is that Africans fail to realise there is no one to replace Tshombe or that others besides him were responsible for Lumumba's death. He himself does not much like Tshombe's record or personality, but cannot conceal a certain admiration for him. *S.* is not afraid of Communism in Africa. "Africans will never be ideological Communists." But the Western approach to Africans is often foolish: for instance, there is no sense in talking to Africans about religious persecution in China or the Soviet Union. What does impress them is the contrast in material conditions between East and West Berlin (not the wall!)....

A FRENCH OFFICIAL: "There are ministers and under-secretaries in this country, and the children in the primary schools—otherwise nothing...."

SO MUCH of Dakar is like a French town that it comes as a shock to find groups of Africans sleeping on the ground or squatting with trays of merchandise, mostly nuts or sticks of grilled meat or smoked fish, between their bare feet. At the end of the main shopping street, the Avenue William Ponty (which contains the famous Lycée William Ponty at which most of the élite of French-speaking West Africa received their education) lies the Sandagha market, a battlemented building in red ochre like a Saharan fort in *Beau Geste*, where the flies rise

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with a roar from the food and the smell is fiercer than anything I have smelt in my whole life (later the city refuse dump at Yaoundé will run it close). All around are the dilapidated buses and trucks in which West Africa travels.

Now the Moslem festival of Tabaski is approaching, and sheep are being driven in from Mauretania for the sacrifice. *Dakar-Matin* devotes one of its few news-items to a clash between Moors selling sheep and Wolofs buying them near the municipal slaughter-house. Result: six wounded in hospital. Walking down the Avenue William Ponty I find a similar quarrel in progress between local shoe-blacks aged between eleven and seventeen and a uniformed character who must be in the Senegalese army. Returning five minutes later, the thing seems to have reached its climax. The uniform is holding his head, in which there is now a deep trench like a scarlet parting, while the shoe-blacks are disappearing over the horizon, one of them hurling a cudgel over a fence. The toughness of the Senegalese army seems undoubted: any ordinary man would have been laid out cold. He appears to be rather sorry for himself, protesting loudly and calling on passers-by for sympathy. He gets little from me, since a few minutes ago he had been proclaiming that he would beat the shoe-blacks until they were dead. David and Goliath.

I GO TO THE *Petit Palais* (a sort of presidential guest house) to meet Mr. David Jawara, the Prime Minister of Gambia, the latest African territory to become independent and one of the smallest. Senegalese security precautions are considerable, but the Gambians shout down from upstairs to admit me, and I get through. Mr. Jawara is quiet and modest and visibly determined to play his new prime-ministership cool. His Foreign Minister, El Hadji Badar N'Diaye, is more expansive altogether. He is a big man who looks bigger in his robes and keeps throwing himself back in his chair and bursting into laughter. He is resident in Dakar, as the main problem of Gambian foreign relations is the fact that the Senegalese would like to federate with this small country that lies across their communications in so inconvenient a way. However, I get the impression as my interview progresses that the Gambian identity looks better from the latitude of Bathurst than it does from that of Dakar. I ask Mr. Jawara what he thinks about the meeting of French-speaking states in Nouakchott last February and the communiqué which attacked Ghanaian "subversion." He replies that, if Ghana has done these things, then it is not "in the spirit of" the Organisation for African Unity (OAU), but seems unsure whether or not to join the French-speaking states, if they decide not to proceed to Accra for the OAU meeting in the autumn. At this point N'Diaye cuts in to say that, if there are differences, it would be "better to discuss them" rather than refuse to go.

Gambia is clearly an African new boy with a new boy's troubles, while itself presenting a major political problem for Senegal which could do without complications of this kind. The Senegalese, I am told, were very annoyed with Britain for granting Gambia independence and are worried about the possibility of people they are not keen on (such as the Ghanaians or Algerians) getting a foothold there. Events in Zanzibar make everyone look twice at small enclaves, but, since the cost of living in Bathurst is half what it is in Dakar and the Gambians make a good living out of smuggling, it is hard to see why they should want to federate with a country that has little to offer economically. On the other hand, they feel (quite rightly) that they would be wise to play along with President Senghor in terms of foreign policy.

THE SENEGALESE also have to cope with Portuguese Guinea. This territory borders on the Casamance province, and, if it were to become independent might increase unrest in what has always been the most isolated part of Senegal —because Gambia cuts it off from the rest of the country—as well as the most difficult. The most active liberation movement operates from Guinea—the *Partido Africano da Independencia da Guiné e Cabo Verde*[3] (PAIGCV)—but, since the Portuguese have established quite an effective chain of military posts along the Guinea frontier, its guerrilleros try to outflank them by passing through Senegalese territory. This embarrasses Dakar, and a judicious compromise has been reached by which the PAIGCV men can pass through on their way to the front line, but have to fight their way back into Guinea if they want to return there. In other words, and despite the existence of a rival liberation movement in Senegal, the Senegalese realise that the ultimate disposal of Portuguese Guinea is bound to be unfavourable to their interests and wish to put off resolving the problem as long as possible.

Senegal's attitude on this question is one more of the many paradoxes that diversify African politics and are easy to miss from London or Paris. Who would have expected that the "revolutionary" President Sekou Touré would have supported the Youlouist opposition to the "revolutionary" régime in Congo-Brazzaville?

[3] The African Independence Party of Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands.

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Or that President Nkrumah, President Modibo Keita of Mali, and President Sekou Touré would all dislike one another sufficiently to cancel out "socialist" sympathies? Or that socialist Guinea would be saved economically by American mining companies? The discovery of "the way to love one's fellow man and hate one's next-door neighbour" is not confined to Europe. In Africa ideology and basic nationalism are constantly modified by personal relations and the increasingly influential vested interests of independent states. In this way so-called "revolutionary" and "moderate" African states or parties are becoming more and more like the Guelfs and Ghibellines of medieval Italy. The "revolutionaries" defeated inside one state seek refuge with its "socialist" neighbour where they intrigue and skirmish across the frontier—until such time as their hosts decide that their interests are best served by a reconciliation with the adjoining régime, and the exiles have to set out once again on their travels to Algiers or Cairo or anywhere that wants to receive them. But theirs will be an increasingly hard lot, since all West African states are coming to realise that to support exiles against neighbours is a game any number can play and which almost anyone can lose. Precedent would seem to show that writing a *Divine Comedy* is a more rewarding way of spending time in banishment than taking courses in guerrilla warfare, but precedent is notoriously unwelcome to those who wish to find a Fidel Castro in every exiled lawyer.

Conversation with *B.*, a Senegalese judge, at the *Palais de Justice*, which is at the very point of the Dakar peninsular, surrounded by water and open to the winds. It is an impressive building with forests of thin, elongated columns surrounding its main courtyard. The general effect is not unlike that of the *Palais de Chaillot*. *B.*, however, a quiet man without any of the tension that seems so often to grip African officials or politicians when they talk to a European journalist, says that the steel windows are being rotted by the salt and that the spectacular position implies constant repairs to the building. He then goes on to talk about law in Senegal. There is unification of the judiciary (*i.e.*, everyone appears before the same courts which was not the case under French rule), but not of the law. There are some thirty-seven types of "customary law" as well as the modern law introduced by the state. The result is, *B.* says, that some cases are very complex if there is a conflict. Take for instance the case of an Islamic Wolof married to non-Islamic Mandingo. Under what law should a dispute be tried? The Senegalese Ministry of Justice is apparently enquiring into what customary law actually exists and will try to push it along in the right direction (*i.e.* discourage wife-beating and so forth).

I ask about crime in Senegal. *B.* replies that there is little crime of the gangster variety or vice and racketeering of the kind one gets in most big cities. But there is a good deal of violence as between peasants—hitting people with axes when they beat your cow, etc. Rape is unknown, and juvenile delinquency is rare. When it occurs—in cases of petty theft, for example—children are treated by the law as though they were adults. *B.* insists on the need to harmonise laws in West Africa, but complains of the great difficulties that arise between French- and English-speaking Africans. For example, the term *détention préventive* which in French means "detention on remand" was taken at a recent meeting to mean "imprisonment without trial" by English-speaking African lawyers, thereby confusing the whole discussion. *B.* claims: "The Nigerians refuse to learn French."

A foreign resident in Dakar: "Capitalists are frightened by the very word Socialism. In the Ivory Coast Houphouet-Boigny has succeeded in reassuring foreign investors. That's not so here despite the fact that one can take money out. Houphouet never talks about the Ivory Coast as an 'under-developed' country, but as an 'expanding' country. It's a different state of mind."

I am invited to lunch out along the coast with Professor *X.* from Dakar University. He shows me a Chinese pamphlet printed in Albania which he has been sent, God knows why. It is the usual stuff with lashings of blood and long-winded jargon. The fact that it seems to have been posted in Léopoldville casts some doubt on its authenticity, however. Coming back in the car I go up to the lighthouse on top of one of the two rounded hills known as *Les Mamelles*. And there is the enormous airport of Yof, the line of foam along the shore, and somewhere beyond the sea, Brazil. There is nothing more exciting in the world than this sudden realisation of a place's true position in the complex of continents, the instinctive mastery of geography and politics with a *coup d'oeil*. This is the salt of travel. Dakar points towards America from Africa, and the slave-trade, the syncretic African religions of Brazil, Afro-Cuban art and the Mambo all follow.

The first sign of Mali's "socialist choice" is the Ilyushin with the Czech pilot ("This is Captain Novotny speaking") that does the trip from Dakar east to Bamako. As we come in to land, the Niger swings into sight, a big, sluggish, brown river moving slowly through a country of small hills and burnt scrub with

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the occasional grove of trees surrounding a village, whose huts already have the pointed Sudanese roofs. At the airport there are endless formalities, though I avoid the worst of them by having left my spare foreign currency in Dakar. The heat is stifling. Then at last out through the barriers and off along an earth road to the town. Red ochre and brown are the colours here. The earth is red-brown, the houses are brown baked clay and there is a layer of reddish dust over everything. Only the trees are green. One has the impression of a town produced by a minor convulsion in the earth's surface and now sinking back into the ground—a true impression, since in the rainy season, the walls of the buildings are washed away, dissolving back into the mud from which they came. In the air is the acrid smell of smoke coming from dozens of little fires lighted in the drainage ditches to consume rubbish and leaves. It mingles strangely and typically with the scent of flowering trees. An undertone of harshness, but it is the sweetness of the trees that is exotic here.

In the main street many shops are closed and there is nothing to buy in the others. In a bookshop there are works of Marx and Lenin mouldering quietly, some improving American novels translated into French with a subsidy from the USIS, some old French text-books and a few copies of books published by *Présence Africaine*. Otherwise nothing. The restaurant attached to the hotel is called *L'Aquarium* and has obviously been done up at some point in the style of the late 'fifties. But one fish tank is covered with weed, the lights do not work and the jazzy decorations are peeling. Here sit some Africans and many French; the latter are clad in abbreviated blue shorts and khaki shirts open to the navel and are accompanied by tired-looking wives and daughters. They eat *saucisse d'Auvergne* and *langue de boeuf* at vast expense. On the walls are *risqué* English or American drawings of the golf-club lavatory type.

Early visit to Ministry of Information and Tourism, a pleasantly cool building with verandahs. I am told I must wait for the minister's press counsellor, so I digest the two sheets of Bamako's daily paper, *L'Essor* (*Organe de l'Union Soudanaise RDA*). On each page there are rhymed slogans, thus:

L'OPTION POUR LA REVOLUTION
NE S'ARRETE PAS A LA SIMPLE INTENTION,
LA CONSTRUCTION SOCIALISTE, PLUS QUE DES MOTS,
EXIGE DE PRODUIRE A TOUS LES NIVEAUX.

EN TRAVAILLANT BIEN, CREONS L'EMULATION
POUR LE SUCCES DE NOTRE OPTION;
C'EST A CETTE SEULE CONDITION
QUE NOUS SERONS BONS MILITANTS DE LA REVOLUTION!

The press counsellor arrives and asks why I have not been introduced by my embassy. (So much for journalistic independence!) A telephone call, however, establishes that I really am a British journalist, and he then asks why I did not write that I was coming. Can I come back in the afternoon, and he will see what can be done.

When I return in the afternoon, I am introduced to the Minister of Information, Dr. Mamadou Gologo who, as well as occupying his official position, is a highly productive poet. After some backchat about "journalists who come to Mali for a quick visit and get it all wrong" and a firm statement on my part that I am under no actual obligation to write anything at all about Mali, he promises his help, and some hectic telephoning is done by the press attaché. Further conversation with the minister, who, rather unnervingly, keeps his eyes averted from one throughout, reveals him as yielding to no one in the purity of his Malian socialism or in his suspicion of "American imperialism." Before President Modibo Keita's visit to China last year the "imperialism" denounced by Mali's leaders was unidentified. Now it is American.

The Chinese are much in evidence in Mali putting up a cigarette factory and contributing a large structure that looks like a film set for the *Siege of Peking* to the coming trade fair. There are quite a lot of them—someone says he has counted 224 at a go—since they appear to have imported some coolies for their construction work. The government here has no notion of the possible dangers involved in this presence—if one were wanting to be alarmist, one could say that 500 Chinese would be an easy match for the Mali army. But that seems ridiculous, and, in general, it is tempting to mock at "Chinese subversion" in Africa—largely because one never sees it in action. The Chinese are like the Apaches in a western. First one hears about them ("Chinese at Bangui" = "Apaches in them thar hills"), then one sees smoke-signals (or correspondents of the New China News Agency), finally there are the creatures themselves in full cry and looking very American with cameras slung round the neck and neatly laundered shirts. One must expect great powers to exert influence all over the world, and there is no reason why China should be an exception. But Chinese policy in Africa is mischievous (as is also Algerian) since it consists purely of stirring the African pot. Peking has no interest in stability in the world for the time being—least of all in under-developed countries. And it is above all stability that Africa needs. The perpetual presence of a backer always ready to aid malcontents and raise the revolutionary stakes simply means that African states have

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another handicap added to their already considerable disadvantages. At this rate will they ever pull themselves up by their boot-straps? Of course, one might say (as one observer has said to me) that, if one has to have Chinese somewhere, it might as well be in Mali—a miserably poor state far from anywhere. In fact, the Chinese probably attach little importance to Mali. What they would like is a foothold in the Ivory Coast or Senegal.

STROLLING back to the hotel after dinner, it is very hot, but the trees whisper. So do the mosquitoes which, I gather, have gradually ceased to be sprayed over the last five years. For hundreds of miles around the little crumbling town there is the savannah burnt brown by the sun, and to the north the Sahara. At night one can feel them all—the hot winds, the sufferance on which men live here, the great river as broad at Bamako as the Thames at Richmond sweeping down through the heart of the West African bulge to the sea, an estuary fifty or sixty miles across. One can feel the pressures: the pressure to be ill, the pressure not to work, the pressure to drink or live on one's nerves. Can there be a modern industrial civilisation here? A British sociologist on a visit asked why the basin of the Niger had not been transformed like that of the Nile. Was it because the Egyptians worked to adapt themselves to their environment for hundreds of years of prehistory, whereas, if there was once an empire of Mali, it was an empire of semi-nomadic conquerors living off the Saharan trade-routes...?

MALIAN POLITICS seem for the moment to depend almost entirely on the country's economic situation. The régime has succeeded in disrupting the traditional channels of a subsistence economy by trying to establish co-operatives and abolish small traders, so that there are sporadic shortages of rice and millet in parts of the country and even in Bamako itself.[4] The Mali franc is worth nothing, the country can only afford essential imports and soon will not be able to afford those, the cattle raisers drive their herds over the frontier and have bank accounts in CFA francs in Abidjan. If this situation continued to get worse, then it might produce serious popular discontent. And were the President, Modibo Keita, to disappear, then the moderates might be at an advantage in dealing with the more extreme "revolutionaries" in that they possess a territorial basis for their political power, whereas men like Gologo or Ousman Ba, the Foreign Minister, do not. The recent *rapprochement* with France, and the present Paris negotiations on the terms of French support for the Mali franc are signs that the régime realises the delicacy of its position. No one seems to know how these negotiations are going, but it is interesting to see that, on Mali's side, they are being conducted by Ousman Ba and Seydou Badiane Kouyaté (both "revolutionaries"). Modibo Keita is evidently determined that, if an agreement is signed, there shall be no opposition to it on the left. On the French side, it is said that De Gaulle is in favour of aid to the Mali franc despite the opposition of the *Ministère des Finances*, so Mali will probably get something, if not all it wants. In any case, France is playing the West's hand here—not unsuccessfully, but at a price. Everyone agrees that, if something has to be done "about the Chinese," only France can do it.

AT TEN O'CLOCK in the morning I go to Party Headquarters, a new building just outside town, to see Idrissa Diarra, the political secretary and (by all accounts) the second man in the party after Modibo Keita himself. He receives me in a room lavishly decorated with revolutionary souvenirs: a large picture of Lenin addressing the workers of Petrograd, Chinese paintings (Socialist style), a sporting rifle, a musical sputnik etc.—much the type of bric-à-brac that one spends one's last zloty or crowns buying in an airport in Eastern Europe. I ask about the party's role in Mali, and he replies that "the party is the brain, the officials the body." Its activities extend to all sectors—work in the villages, propaganda for health measures or education. Its political bureau and officials are elected directly by the party congress which is held every three years.

"Is there a special Malian 'way' to Socialism?"

"No, it is just the same as everyone else's." He adds that, of course, it is affected by local tradition, but so is Socialism elsewhere (*e.g.* in Russia). I ask about Nouakchott and the formation of the *Organisation Commune Africaine et Malgache* (OCAM). Idrissa Diarra replies that this contravenes the statutes of the OAU and must be "modified." He also protests strongly that Mali is not "anti-American," but is willing to take elements from all countries. But he condemns the Ivory Coast as having an "artificial" economy. African countries must have "natural" economies.

As I am leaving he puts his arm in mine and begins to talk about Britain. Why is there not more aid for Mali from Britain? After a short stay in French-speaking Africa I can answer that one: "It's because most British aid goes to Commonwealth countries."

"That isn't just," he says, and I rather agree

[4] This in a country 5.8 per cent of whose exports in 1960 consisted of rice.

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with him. I take the occasion to say that he should visit Britain ("see our new universities!"), and he replies that he wants to come, but does not know when. He adds that Britain is "insular" and only comes out of its island when fighting for its life. I say rather unconvincingly that we may soon be in the European Community, to which, much to my surprise, he agrees with apparent enthusiasm—whether because he approves of a united Europe as having more opportunities of standing up to the nefarious Americans or else because he is being politely inconsequential, I do not know. A pleasant, tough, cagey politician who gives an impression of efficiency and, if necessary, an ability to see where the best interests of himself or his country lie. Despite the "Finland Station" atmosphere, no ideologue.

A DIPLOMAT: "They tap phones better than they service them...." (The Czechs apparently sent a mission of "security advisers" to Bamako—something Mali could have done without, one might think.)

A BUSINESSMAN on the plane back to Dakar: "They've no notion of an economy. There's a deficit each year of several milliards of francs, but no notice is taken. In 1964 2,000 tons of kola nuts were said to have been exported, but Mali has never grown kola at all. It was all imported from the Ivory Coast, and meant a loss of foreign exchange. Even the Russians are leaving."

WHAT IS Mali's future? Economically, no doubt, a disaster, and it is hard to see how it can get any better until the interior is thoroughly opened up. What remains is a subsistence economy which has been completely upset since, even if the country were more accessible, it has no natural resources unless the Select Diamond Company actually finds diamonds near the Guinea border. There is trouble with the Touareg in the north (there are all sorts of suggestions about who stirred them up, but the truth is that they do not want to pay taxes or be ruled by black Africans), and the shaky state of Sekou Touré's régime in Guinea is bound to be reflected in Mali. As against all this, it is difficult not to be impressed by the extraordinary self-assurance of Malians, which is the reverse side of their ability simply to neglect disagreeable facts. The self-assurance, no doubt, of warriors who dimly remember that the great empires of West African history have arisen on the savannah and are confident of their own superiority to the peoples of the coast. But there is also the mythical confidence of the small boy living a fairy-tale. There may be colonialists and imperialists lurking to take advantage of the little prince, but there will also be the good genii and ever-kindly demons (*les nations frères*) bearing gifts with them—a factory here or a power-station there. And the best way of dealing with good genii is to accept the gift, express one's thanks, and pass on to the next benefactor. For will there not always be spirits to befriend as important a country as Mali, whose destiny it is to grow and develop and become rich and powerful? The Malian "road to Socialism" therefore has a symbolic value. It is an announcement of the importance of Mali, of the belief of Mali's rulers that the eyes of the world are firmly fixed on them in fascinated anticipation of the results of their "experiment." Naturally, there is always the odd delegation of East German journalists or North Vietnamese textile workers to confirm this belief. But there are also times when the *décalage* between myth and reality, between the exciting business of concluding cultural agreements with the Mongol republic and the sordid task of making ends meet, becomes too great. But if desire outruns performance and the awakening to a cold world is painful, there are still imperialists who are surely responsible for this flaw in the universe, there are still the meetings and the speeches and the slogans that mark a new phase of the struggle against the forces of evil. For the foreigner there is something touching in the candour of this approach to politics. Mali may not have a polity, but it has one of the oldest and most hypnotic myths in the world: the imperialist serpent still abroad in the garden of Eden beside the Niger: an innocent lament for lost innocence.

NOTES: The smell of water from the Niger at night. Women with long necks carrying bundles or pots on their heads. Polish *piwo* in the Grand Hotel bar. The loud chirping of the crickets at night. "Bamako will soon have a third night club...." The lepers thrusting their stumps of hands at the passers-by. Red dust on shoes and clothes. The yellow and black lizards on the tops of walls. The Rotary club dance in the Pigalle night-club with a huge reproduction of Toulouse-Lautrec's Aristide Bruand poster. Whisky ten shillings a shot. "It is like a novel by Evelyn Waugh...." "But for their dignity." "But for their dignity."

The heat burns reflection and desire out of you, pressing you into the ground, submitting you to its own imperatives. You are not yourself, but fascinated, and a little in despair.

Anthony Hartley

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EAST & WEST

Letter from Prague

The Empty Pedestal

> *"... One can perhaps safely discuss it now. In those days many people, and among them the best, had a secret maxim which ran: try with all your might to comprehend the decrees of the high command, but only up to a certain point; then avoid further meditation...."*
>
> KAFKA (*1917*)

THE FILMS which have been coming out of Czechoslovakia recently have been surprising the world. One that lasts for barely forty minutes was shown me at the Film Club in the Narodni trida by its director Juranek (who, like the other new directors, Forman and Jireš, must be still under thirty). The title of the film, if I understand it correctly, means "A figure to be supported"; its subject is "the Search for Comrade Kilian"—and the search for a vanished office which hires out cats for the day and, when a young man wants to hand back an ailing cat, seems suddenly to have ceased to exist and indeed never to have existed at all.

The film opens with a young man walking through almost empty streets, to a sound accompaniment of marching boots and rhythmical applause. Then he walks down a dim endless corridor, the walls of which are plastered with old posters: a portrait of Stalin, a denunciation of "Colorado beetle Truman," an official proclamation "NÁŠ LID BUDE" ("OUR PEOPLE WILL BE....")—but we do not find out what they are going to be, because this bill is obscured by the next, which has to do with the Korean war and the "disease germs" which General Ridgway was supposed to drop from the sky. So we are brought backwards into the Stalin era, so uncannily remote. Why should we be looking at all these bill posters of yesterday? Are they not today quite inappropriate to remember? These are the ironies in the attitude of young Czechs to their most recent past.

It has been said of this young generation—which has, I think, been showing more verve and intellectual vigour than that of any other country in Communist-ruled Europe—that it consists, not of angry young men, but rather of "surprised young men." Their elders have little to offer them; they have no memory of "great figures" and see no evidence of great deeds or achievements. What is demanded of them is a perpetual capacity to forget what was laid down only a short while ago: always that unquestioning loyalty to authority that the good soldier Schweik (that permanent model of Czech irony) reduced to absurdity by taking it in dead earnest. "Authority" is an anonymous, colourless term, and quite catches the tone of the country's ruling caste. What it wants is a nation of Lethean water-drinkers, aware only of what today's *Rudé Právo* (or the Slovak *Pravda*) has gone through the motions of publishing.

In young Václav Havel's satirical play *The Garden Party*—which after eighteen months was still playing to full houses in the small Theatre "Na zábradli" (and enjoyed a deserved success in West Berlin)—one of the characters remarks that there is nothing to choose between those who said what was required of them yesterday and those who say what is required of them today. The talk is everywhere of the "scrapping of dogmatism" and the "overcoming of the cult of personality." (What was it basically—the unintelligible delusion of a whole people, a spontaneous psychosis generated from below or only a deliberate method of government?) But the new slogans sound just as bogus in the ears of the younger generation as the former panegyrics of the "great Stalin" and the "great Gottwald"; and not least because to a large extent it is the same officials, the same ideologists, who have passed from one "vocabulary" to the other. In Budapest Kadar is not Gerö and, in Warsaw, Gomulka is not Bierut; but in Prague Novotný is still Novotný. The plausibility of the change of heart, which is here proclaimed simultaneously as representing "continuity" and an "improvement," suffers visibly. What with the tragedy of trials and the comedy of the new dialectical acrobatics, there is no lack of raw material for political cabaretists.

ARE THESE ALERT YOUNG PEOPLE moving to a kind of nihilism that merely ridicules the past and everything connected with it? Actually, the very reverse seems to me to be taking place. The revolt is also an objection against the amnesia of "the great forgetting." "We are now

FRANÇOIS BONDY, *who edits* Preuves *in Paris, has written regularly for* ENCOUNTER. *Among his recent contributions were "On Misunderstanding Eichmann" (November 1961), "The Pilloried Pope" (October 1963), "The Struggle for Kafka and Joyce" (May 1964), and "Simone de Beauvoir: Notes on a Lady Mandarin" (October 1965).*

The accompanying drawings were sent to us from Prague by the young Czech cartoonist IVAN STEIGER.

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gradually ceasing to battle with the 'German past' and are busying ourselves with our own," one director said to me. Thus a new Czech film, *Assassination,* deals with the killing of Heydrich without the "negative legend" officially disseminated about the killer being a "western agent" and therefore suspect. I was struck by the fact that Klíma, the young author of the play *The Castle*, who spent some years of his boyhood in the Theresienstadt concentration camp, has written a book about Karel Čapek, the representative writer of the "bourgeois republic"; it illustrates the trend to revive what in this case is not the blackened but merely the neglected past.

I visited the house in which Capek spent his last year, near Dobříš Castle. The cuttings from *Lidové Noviny*, the good liberal newspaper for which he wrote, were a reminder that there was once a Czech daily press of world rank; all the household literary details, including the famous travel books, are a reminder of the distant time when the world was open, and of Karel Čapek's acuteness, humour, and terrifying visions of the future: "the Robot," the successor to the Golem, was his creation. He died at Christmas, 1938, still only in middle-age, deeply depressed by the events at Munich, and his brother Joseph, a distinguished artist, did not survive German imprisonment.

Out of the Past

HOW CAN the past mean quite the same to the Slovaks as it does to the Czechs? Still, common to both is the ultimate failure of the recent attempts to transform it.

"I called on you here nineteen years ago in 1947," I said to the aged writer František Langer, the most important survivor of Čapek's generation, when I met him at Dobříš Castle. "That is a long time ago," he said, for understandably enough he had forgotten our conversation, though I remembered it well. 1947 is indeed longer ago here than elsewhere. A year later the resuscitated "bourgeois republic" collapsed, and when I paid a brief visit to Prague in that fateful year—I had been in Warsaw, where Gomulka had just been arrested—I arrived just in time for the state funeral of President Eduard Beneš. Beneš was not "the great European" as he had been called in the League of Nations, nor was he an acute political thinker. But within his limits he was a democrat, and it was Beneš' fate twice to have to accept a death sentence on Czech democracy, the first time in Munich, under the pressure of Hitler and of the West (in whose solidarity Beneš and most Czechs had blind confidence) and the second time "a thousand years later" (as I was told) in Prague, under the pressure of his closest ally, the Soviet Union. Beneš had been very popular, and I remember the spontaneous ovation he was given when he unexpectedly appeared in his box at the National Theatre. He then seemed to be the guarantor of a gradual return from people's democracy" to "the rule of law," and his personal intervention in cases of arbitrary arrest contributed to this reputation. But now he was dead, having survived his "republic" by only a few months. Mourning women in head-scarves wanted to approach the coffin, but I watched young tough militiamen brutally drive them away. The formal state funeral could not be allowed to degenerate into a demonstration of sympathy amounting to an expression of hostility to the new régime.

At that time, in 1947, three portraits hung in all official places—Masaryk on the left, Stalin on the right, and Beneš in the middle. I noticed that at the trade union headquarters the only portrait other than those of Stalin, Tito, and Dimitrov was that of Gottwald, the Prime Minister. Masaryk stood for the humanist tradition in home politics, and Stalin provided the world-political guarantee. Beneš had placed his trust in the Soviet Union as unequivocally as he had placed it in France ten years before. In his message to the provisional National Assembly on October 28th, 1945, he had said, "It is self-evident that as a small state we shall not fail to orient ourselves in the first place towards the state that offers us most security...." He had returned from London to Prague by way of Moscow, and to him the state that offered "most security" was the Soviet Union. Czechoslovakia had been in fact if not formally allotted to the Soviet sphere of influence. Did Beneš have any other alternative but to "make the best" of this alliance? The wartime Czech government-in-exile had had to wait for a whole year in London to be put on a par with the other governments-in-exile. At the time the Ambassador in Moscow of independent, clerico-Fascist Slovakia was Monsignor Tiso's brother; and not till August 1942 did Great Britain and de Gaulle's Free France declare the signatures to the Munich treaty to be null and void. Such memories linger. It was (and remains) difficult for the Czechs to be a "Western democracy" knowing that the West did not care.

Beneš, Masaryk, and Stalin looked like a strange trinity, but I thought it might possibly last for a long time. A number of books appeared at that time on Czechoslovakia as "the bridge between East and West," the shining example of a new co-existence. Today we know how false were those hopes and how illusory those prospects. But I still sometimes think that

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this failure was not "inevitable." Had the Finnish President Paasikivi not resisted the pressure of Moscow and his own Communist Ministers, would it not today seem "inevitable" to us that Finland had taken the path of "popular democracy"? If Paasikivi said no and Beneš yes, this was not a simple consequence of political alignments, though the pro-Russian feelings of the Czechs and the anti-Russian feelings of the Finns had their importance.

Beneš, the "restorer," stood for the time of defeat and collapse; but Masaryk, the "President-Liberator," had been identified with distinction and political success. Thus a systematic attempt has been made to erase the memory of Masaryk, as indeed of all recent history, a remarkable paradox in a state that was created by historians, from Palacký to Masaryk. It was at that time that the huge pharaonic monument to Stalin was erected, visibly proclaiming Moscow to be the capital and Prague the seat of a satrapy. Events had first to take place in Moscow before they could be reflected in this province. The news of Stalin's political death reached Prague only after a time-lag of years, and not till then did a truly satrapic "parallel operation" take place and the loyal Gottwald was ejected, in turn, from the official mausoleum. My Czech friends described to me the difficulties involved in the removal of the Stalin memorial. A commission had to be formed to plan the operation so that it would not cause excessive damage to the neighbourhood. (One of the characters in Klíma's *The Castle* is the head of a curious "Commission for the Correction of the Statue.") One morning the Caucasian's head was lifted off by ropes.

Some symbols are just too obvious. On October 30th, 1956, I saw the Stalin statue in Budapest after the popular fury had dealt with it. It had been torn from its pedestal, and only the boots remained. In Prague there was no popular outburst, but only calculated, bureaucratic action. The pedestal was left where it was. Its foundations were apparently built in too deep to be removable without endangering the city's drains. What an appropriate monument for the present régime!—a ponderous stone block just standing there for its own sake, with nothing on it, not even the statue of a tyrant, a faceless incubus, weight without form, symbol of a new cult of non-personality.

There is also another pedestal—the slender granite monolith in the second inner court at the Hradčany. Someone told me that it had been erected in honour of Masaryk, whose name had been obliterated, but someone else insisted that the idea had been to erect one day a statue of liberty on it. These two pedestals, from one of which Stalin had been removed while "Liberty" had not yet been put on the other, struck me as the clear double-image of Prague today.

Of course, the obliteration of Masaryk's name was more temporary than the obliteration of Stalin's. But the grotesque attempt to turn Masaryk into a "non-person" has been made. In the so-called memorial exhibition of national literature at the Strahov monastery a facsimile is displayed of a page of the celebrated MSS. of Královy Hradec and Zelena Hora, which were revealed as a patriotic forgery in the 'nineties—a deed of moral fortitude on Masaryk's part which has always been resented by certain Czech nationalists and, like his intervention in a famous ritual murder trial, gave him the stature of a "true humanist." The discovery of the forgery is mentioned at the Strahov exhibition —but the discoverer's name is suppressed. Masaryk is also omitted from the latest Czech *Who's Who*, which claims to include all the names of note in Czech literature. But the omission has not been accepted in silence. The Brno newspaper *Host do domu* stated in January 1965: "To claim that Masaryk did not make a significant contribution to Czech literature is a great error. An addendum should be made in the next edition...." This could not have been stated more moderately, but the fact that it was stated is something new. One could also note in the bookshops a recent book on Masaryk's philosophy, written by a young Czech philosopher.

Historians to whom I spoke admitted that the period of the "bourgeois republic" had not (with the exception of a few monographs) been adequately dealt with in recent years, and that the time was coming for a new and more "positive" evaluation of Masaryk and Beneš. As both Presidents were sociologists, the re-admission of sociology—in Bratislava earlier than in Prague—was in itself a kind of rehabilitation. But how "unmentionable" Masaryk must have been was made plain to me in conversation with a member of the Academy of Sciences. We had been talking of a certain person who had been able to work in Paris. That was, he said, "thanks to a grant that President Masaryk—do you know the name?—obtained for him...." Is a name out of the past important? I suppose that this name will again become much better known and more familiar to the Czechs of a younger generation. One does not have to be a chauvinist to want to be proud of a prominent figure in the history of one's country, and of whom can the Czechs be prouder than of the Moravian *kutscher's* son Masaryk?

"Strange," a historian said to me, "our young people take no interest in recent history. We

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conducted a questionnaire and published the results in a popular journal. Young readers preferred turning to a book about the Hussites...." The favourite historical period does indeed seem to be that of Jan Hus and the Táborites, on which innumerable books have been written. Is this perhaps because it was the only time when the Czechs made their mark on world history? Or is it also because the historians themselves want to avoid recent history? A compilation published by the Academy states that "the most important source" of recent history is the speeches and writings of Klement Gottwald. But as this source is now officially regarded as under a shadow, the consequence must be that the last twenty years are left in greater obscurity than the medieval establishment of Tábor in the year 1419. If the younger generation does not read what passes for historiography on contemporary affairs, it surely does not mean that they are uninterested in the events; indeed, the periodicals, plays, and films in which this interest is expressed demonstrate the opposite. Also it was clear from my conversations that the scholars (including many who carry some weight in the party) would be pleased if they could abandon the "prescribed vocabulary" and were allowed to write "real history"; and things appear to be moving in that direction.

Taboos remain. A historian exhibited with pride a coloured map showing the site of every theatre and cinema in the country. But is there a map which shows the present and former composition of the country's various linguistic groups? Or would this be, as someone remarked, of "too great interest" (to the expelled Germans? to the remaining Hungarian minority?).

Czech and Slovak

IT IS FREELY admitted in relation to the Slovaks (not to the Germans) that the "bourgeois republic" suffered from excessive centralisation. Masaryk's promise to turn Czechoslovakia into a "higher Switzerland" was greeted with scorn by the right-wing Czech nationalists. "Higher twaddle," Kramář called it at the time. And when the Slovaks took advantage of the opportunity of withdrawing from the control of Prague in 1938, this reflected a long-disregarded national feeling that was by no means confined to the followers of Father Tiso or the Fascist Hlinka. Slovak national feeling also existed (and still exists) among the Communists, and the régime prides itself on having taken it into account. The old attempts to insist on a "Czechoslovak" nation and a "Czechoslovak" language have been abandoned.

Just as the centralised Hapsburg Empire was turned a hundred years ago into the Austro-Hungarian "dual monarchy" by the "compromise," so has centralised Czechoslovakia been formally turned into a "dual republic" of Czechs and Slovaks. But the persecution of innumerable Slovak Communists for "bourgeois-nationalist deviations"—in trials that do *not* date back to the years of the personality cult (now officially declared to have lasted from 1949 to 1953) but to a more recent period in which the present President Novotný played a leading part—gave Slovak dissatisfaction an impetus and earned the Slovak Communists more popularity than they could otherwise have expected. In Prague, attention is drawn to the amount that has been spent on the industrialisation of Slovakia, and that is disputed by no one. There is a parallel with what northern Italy has been doing for the *mezzogiorno* (a party of Italian economists has recently visited Slovakia for comparative study purposes), but most Slovaks say that "grave errors" in capital investment were made during the period of the "planning cult," which nowadays is under just as much of a cloud as the "personality cult." Even the great steel-works, to which ore is transported from the Ukraine on a railway track of Russian width, is held to be an economic white elephant; and no doubt about it, agriculture "suffered heavily" under collectivisation. One is unable to verify such statements, but I know that inquiries have been held and the results are still kept as state and party secrets. This is still a rather secretive place.

IF THE CZECHS remember Masaryk, in Bratislava the role of the Slovak rising and the battles of 1944 play a greater part in people's minds. So does the memory of the executed Foreign Minister Vlado Clementis, to whom a memorial tablet has now been erected. His notes and diaries of his last days, including a touching account of his wife's visit to him on the day before his execution, have now been published. The fact that the dead Clementis (as well as the living Husák and Novomeský) has been completely rehabilitated, while the Czech party secretary Slansky has not, gives a peculiar satisfaction to Slovak national pride. Clementis' widow seems to be coming in for the same kind of special honours as Mrs. Rajk in Budapest.

In the official party history the Slovak rising was played down for years; also it was claimed that the *apparatchik* Vilem Široký (one of those who bore the main responsibility for the execution of Clementis) led it by "leaflets written in prison." I was told in Bratislava that a group of Czech historians met in "conclave" and demolished this legend quite against the party's

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wishes. Široký's final dismissal came about as the result of a public protest by Slovak writers and journalists. Široký is still on the central committee, but at receptions he is left in woeful obscurity (and his wife recently committed suicide). It was undoubtedly the Slovaks who shook Stalinism throughout the country and set liberalisation going. Even if the most important impulses in this direction today again come from Prague, Bratislava retains the glory and a special position. Hence the Slovaks can, on the whole, regard themselves somewhat more as the movers and makers of history and not, like the Czechs, merely as its object. The difference is noticeable.

Many outstanding personalities have been rehabilitated, but not reinstated. At last year's celebration at Banska Bystrica of the twentieth anniversary of the Slovak rising, President Novotný handed the rehabilitated Gustav Husák a "Remembrance Medal." The scene was recorded for television, but instructions were issued immediately afterwards that it was not to be shown. Husák, who was the only accused in the show trials who never "confessed," has declined a small job and is now a mere "member of the Academy," writing books and articles. Novomeský, Kaliský, and other members of the former leading group are also allowed to write, to the great advantage of the journal *Kultúrny život* which has acquired such importance in this whole period; but they remain on the margin. Thus a group of men to whom the régime has admitted it did wrong has been neither silenced nor restored to responsibility. (I wonder whether Communists ever read Machiavelli, in whose *Prince* there are warnings against such half-measures. . . .)

In Bratislava, I seemed to meet only persons who had been persecuted or victimised in one way or another. A student's "bourgeois origin," for instance, had been discovered shortly before he finished his course: he was expelled from the university. Eliminating in this way the offspring of the "bourgeoisie" (*i.e.*, generally the offspring of able, industrious, qualified people) was an act of self-mutilation that is now seen to have been such and has been corrected. Editors had been sent to work in factories and economists became labourers; an important but inconvenient author for whom foreign publishers were competing was not allowed to have his books translated into Western languages because, in the view of the Writers' Association, his work was not "typical of our best writing." (I was told that this sort of thing would not happen today.) There are other cases: a sentence of eight years' imprisonment for membership in "Catholic Action," though the persons concerned engaged in no action whatsoever.

The new fashion now is that it is above all "the good comrades" who are persecuted. In one of his "belated reports" in *Kultúrny život* Ladislav Mnačko told the story of a man who fought for the liberation of the country; he was an Air Force officer in the West; on his return home he was exposed to such vexations that he regretted he had not been "a Slovak Fascist, who could have wriggled through all right. . . ." This piece was deleted from the first edition of Mnačko's book.

Not every Communist, of course, is converted to tolerance because he has been persecuted himself. I am thinking in this connection of the director of the Bratislava Institute of Journalists who was sent to work in a factory as a "Titoist" and after a long period of disfavour managed to work his way back again. I pointed out to him that no foreign newspapers (except the various party organs) were obtainable even in the international hotels. (In a shop window opposite the Hotel Alkron in Prague I actually saw some material for blouses and trousers on which the title and headlines from *Humanité, Unità,* the *Daily Worker, Volksstimme,* etc., were printed as a pattern). Always I was assured that this *could not* be correct, because it was *well known* that the international hotels obtained foreign newspapers for tourists. "Perhaps they are hidden by the hall porter," the director suggested. "Because our policy *is* openness. Our press library subscribes to dozens of foreign newspapers." Later he showed me this library. I opened one of the research files and spotted an article on "The Uniformity of the British Press Explained by its Class Character." On the shelves were the same *Humanité, Unità,* etc., that I had seen on the piece of cloth in the shop window. "And where are the others?" I asked. "They're in the basement," I was told. "After all, this library can also be visited by unauthorised persons. . . ."

How strange that this spirit of censorship should still be taken so much as a matter of course. A striking contrast is provided by the journals in which a new openness to the world appears. I spent many hours in these editorial offices, both in Prague and in Bratislava, and these are impressively serious weekly and monthly reviews (which altogether have at least 300,000 readers and probably many more) and stand in the foreground of intellectual discussion.

The editor of *Kultúrny život* in 1963 (the stormiest and most difficult year) was a young man named Pavol Števček. Like others of his generation, he was taught no Western languages

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at school and has since been far too busy to make up the deficiency. I had to talk to him with the aid of older editors as intermediaries; several of these, like the present editor Juraj Spitzer, talk perfect Hungarian, good German, fair French, and thus recall that Bratislava once had a cosmopolitan, multilingual intelligentsia. More outside the offices than in them I learnt a great deal about the working of a censorship that treats its own existence as a state secret; when it occasionally insists that a contribution be deleted, it takes skilled care that no old-fashioned blank space appears to betray the fact. What progress it would be to have a clumsy censorship that still worked with scissors and obvious last-minute cuts!—or even a modern censorship that confessed to its own existence. This would indeed fit in very well with the welcome transition that is now quietly taking place from a fanatical party state of prescribed unanimity to an authoritarian state that expects only obedience and is gradually learning to co-exist with the beginnings of a relatively independent public opinion.

The *Kultúrny život* story will have to be written some day—for various reasons the time is not yet ripe—and factors such as Slovak national consciousness, unjust persecution of intellectuals and politicians, cosmopolitan tradition, distance from the oppressive capital and the closeness of Vienna (and of the Austrian and German television)—all will have to be taken into account just as much as individual personalities. The thirty-year-old Ševček suffered a heart attack after editing for a year, and nobody was surprised.

THE "SLOVAK SPIRIT" reminded me more of the Polish than of the Czech. Its people were formed by Catholicism and partly also by Calvinism, and a potentiality is there for narrow fanaticism. Tiso's régime was one of the grimmest, worse than Horthy's Hungary. Yet it has a very lively liberal intelligentsia, and there is independence and a touch of spontaneity in everything.

In Bratislava I was shown a film called *The Organ*. The chief character is a priest who believes in the "sacredness of beauty," and takes on as organist a Polish soldier who gives himself out to be a monk. They try to hide and rescue Jewish families. (Few survived, as the uninhabited old Jewish quarter near the Pressburg castle now underlines). The only unsympathetic character is the Party secretary; but the police themselves turn against him and are on the side of "the good priest." This was, I thought, a transfigured picture of life under the Tiso régime. "That's just what our dogmatists said," my companion remarked with a laugh. But it can be regarded as a counterpart of the Slovak film *A Shop in the High Street* that was shown at Cannes, in which the Jewish deportations are depicted without any easy and obvious German villains. This is a new and courageous aspect in films on that subject. But *The Organ* also provides confirmation of the deep roots of a specifically Slovak national feeling.

This emerged in a truly difficult conversation with the leaders of the Writers' Association in Bratislava. Neither of the writers present, both of whom were members of the praesidium, knew any Western language. The theme was "the difference between Czechs and Slovaks." "Certainly," said M., "Czech words from modern industrial society are invading our language—but isn't it the same as the incursion of American words into French?" The comparison struck me as odd. Czech, of course, enjoys a certain precedence as the language of the majority and of the capital. Slovak books and film dialogue are translated into Czech, while the Slovaks generally do not translate Czech originals. Nevertheless Czechs have sometimes been glad to read Slovak; *Kultúrny život* published its critical reports and discussions long before the Prague journals, and copies were sold under the counter in Prague at black market prices.

Though Prague is now the intellectual centre again (as is shown by journals such as *Literární Noviny, Plamen,* and *Tvář*[1]) Slovakia has somewhat greater reserves. How far do the discussions that take place here go "beyond Communism"? Eugen Loebl (another victim of persecution who now plays a leading part in discussion of economic reforms) has argued that individual liberties constitute "the only legitimate substance of all authority." But there are, generally, very clear and severe limits that are still set to discussion, and they appear plainly in Ladislav Mnačko's latest articles.

TO WHAT EXTENT do the Czechs and Slovaks in this time of great change believe in the possibility of independently shaping their own society? This is a question which cannot be asked openly, but it occupies them all the more for that reason. Two foreign ministers of Czechoslovakia, Jan Masaryk and Vlado Clementis, died in circumstances connected—in popular feeling—with the desire for "independence." The realistic feeling for "limited sovereignty" is perceptible. The centuries spent under Austrian rule, the years of suppression under the German occupation (not that the two

[1] *Tvář* had to cease publication in January 1966 on direct party orders.

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periods are in any way comparable), and the allotment to the Soviet sphere of influence provide no foundation for great confidence in the possibility of ever really going their own way. But memories of the "bourgeois republic" are a pointer in the direction of a more independent diplomacy.

Czechs like to think of all the occasions in the past when something of world-wide importance came from Prague. The "rediscovery" of Kafka should be seen in that light (though it would have been inconceivable without Professor Eduard Goldstücker, whose only concern was Kafka's work itself). But in the case of so many zig-zag East European advances, the Party invariably assents only hesitantly; it merely gives "concessions"; it takes no bold initiative of its own. Tourists are sold picture-postcards printed in many languages, showing among other things, Kafka's birthplace; but a tablet has not yet been put on the house. That, apparently, would be too much. This honour has, deservedly, been granted to that remarkable journalist Egon Erwin Kisch (who was, after all, a Communist). Kafka's turn will certainly come. But putting off as long as possible what is already taken for granted is typical of the doctrinaire régime which suspiciously regards advances as retreats.

The Two Sectors

TODAY "two sectors" are to be found in every field. There is collectivised and non-collectivised agriculture, a dead party press on the one hand and living journalism on the other, a partially sluggish and hidebound bureaucracy contrasting with a developing industrial society. The dividing line is not between Communists and non-Communists, but between the efficient and forward-looking and the political worthies who cling to their positions and to the past. Čestmír Císař, previously Minister of Education, belonged to the former; he knows how deep the cleavage is between the generations, and his cautious behaviour at the May student celebrations (with all their breakthrough to satire) showed understanding and avoided the riots of the previous year. For this and other reasons he was recently "exiled" to become Ambassador in Bucharest. Jozef Lenart, the Prime Minister, is also included in this group. A Foreign Trade Ministry official who knows no Western languages and went out and bought expensive but unusable machinery in the West is one of the political worthies. The replacement now taking place of thousands of unqualified factory managers shows the effort that is being made, at long last, to give more scope to properly trained and competent men.

This "co-existence" is to be found throughout the country. In the Philosophical Institute, for instance, doctrinaires and critics uncomfortably rub shoulders.[2] On the whole the changes that have taken place in a very few years have been far-reaching, and I assume that the next years will necessarily be involved with further changes; for, with all its glaring contradictions, Czechoslovakia belongs today to the advance guard of what used to be called the "Eastern Bloc."

THE STRONGEST IMPULSE to "new thinking" was provided by the manifest crisis in economic management. Three years ago Ota Šik, who now condemns command planning, was himself one of the "dogmatists." It must be appreciated that the third five-year plan, which came into force in January 1961, was abandoned as early as August 1962, and was followed by a similarly short-lived "seven-year" plan and an interim plan for 1963. The causes of the crisis were manifold: qualitative deterioration of an "extensively" growing industry; decreased productivity; lack of rationalisation and industrial research; production in individual enterprises over a wide variety of products (instead of being concentrated on a few); accumulation of stocks of unsaleable goods; strain caused by economic aid to "undeveloped" countries (and to Cuba); shortage of capable and enterprising industrial leaders (resulting from the system of making appointments for political services); the catastrophic failure of collectivised agriculture; the lack of proper economic planning (because everyone fought to defend his own territory and all conflicts were bucked up to "higher level," at which capacity for sensible decision was again lacking); labour shortage and bad work discipline. Thus centralisation and decentralisation succeeded each other as if different teams of bureaucracy were playing a game.

[2] The Viennese monthly review, *Forum*, published (October, 1965) a letter by Dr. Ivan Svitak, in which the circumstances of his case were dramatically detailed. Svitak was until a year ago a member of the Philosophical Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences; the Party's Ideological Commission dismissed him. "Stringent administrative methods in philosophical discussion," he wrote, "are quite unusual even in Czechoslovakia. Publishers confiscated all my manuscripts, editorial offices of cultural publications confiscated ten of my articles, all my university lectures were banned, my passport was withdrawn. . . ." He was arrested and then released—in order, he remarks, "to serve as a case of 'exemplary' punishment of 'revisionist orientation'. . . ." But he remains unemployed and hence under threats of prosecution for "parasitism."

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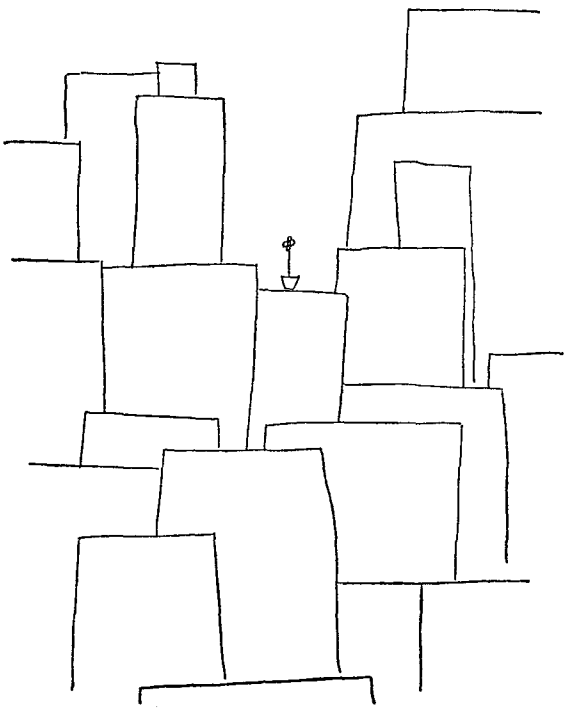
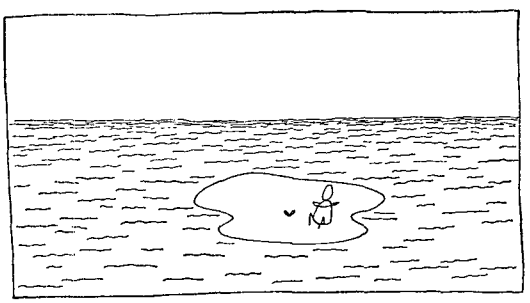
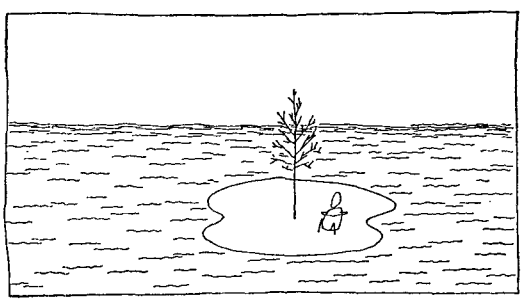
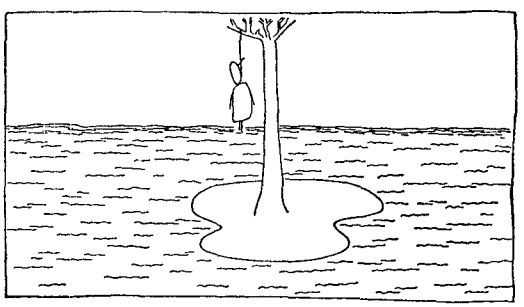


It is hardly surprising that in a country with a highly developed industry and agriculture this general deterioration in quality, this self-exclusion from the world market, and widespread shortages should be felt as peculiarly shocking. In a recent Austrian-Czech television discussion the Austrian side asked: why should two neighbouring countries which started at roughly the same level after the war now be displaying such a wide difference in output and standard of living? The Czechs were unable to answer. The steps which have been taken towards reintroducing "elements of a free market economy" (allowing prices to find their own level in restricted fields), the solemnly celebrated discovery of "the consumer," the still timid efforts to loosen up foreign trade and to let enterprises enjoy the incentive benefits of hard currency—are all claimed by Professor Šik to represent "a further advance in socialist economic thinking," having nothing whatever in common with a "return to capitalism." But the terminology doesn't matter so long as the stubborn adoption of the Russian economic model is recognised as the cause of retrogression.

The change of heart implies, not the setting free of hitherto repressed factors of "material self-interest," but working harder and thinking harder. I have already mentioned Eugen Loebl who, as a survivor of the Slansky trial, is allowed greater freedom of speech than many others; and it was he who remarked that "the State can decree Non-thinking—but not ideas and initiative. . . ."[3]







[3] "Superficially we may appear not to have enough qualified personnel to fill the leading economic posts in industry. In reality the nature of our economic difficulties is different. Do we really want leaders of a New Type? . . . Have we freed ourselves of the illusion that thinking must be concentrated at the Planning Centre and that the function of all others is purely executive and nothing else? Do we think of men as persons or as transformers of directives? . . ." Eugen Loebl in *Kultúrny život*, January 1965.

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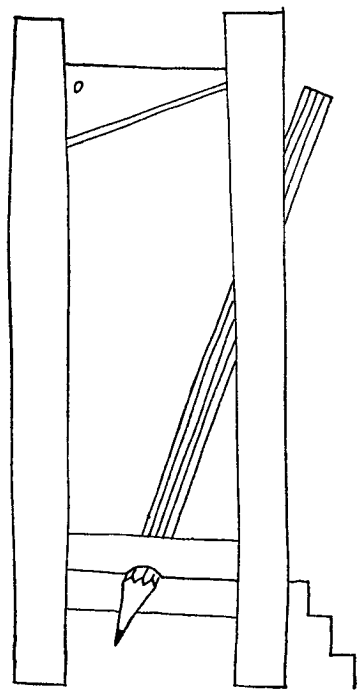

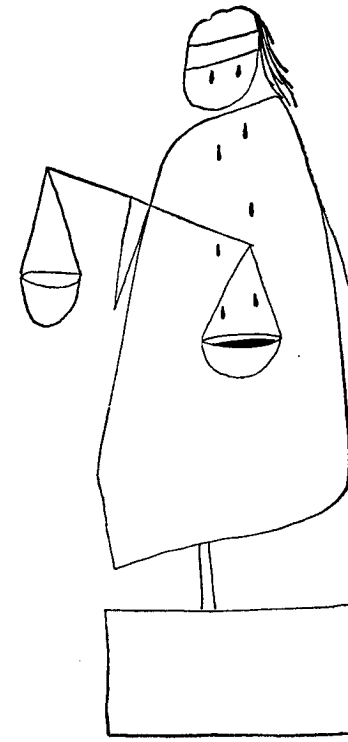

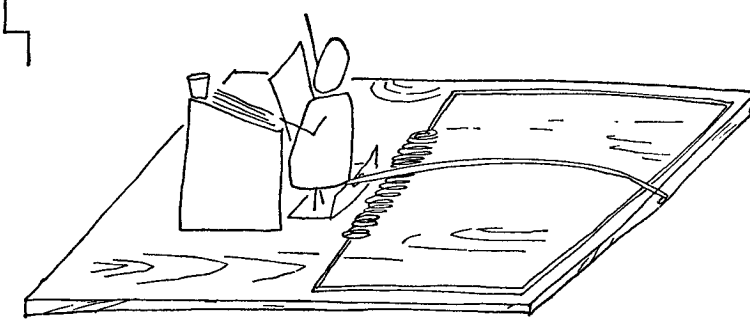

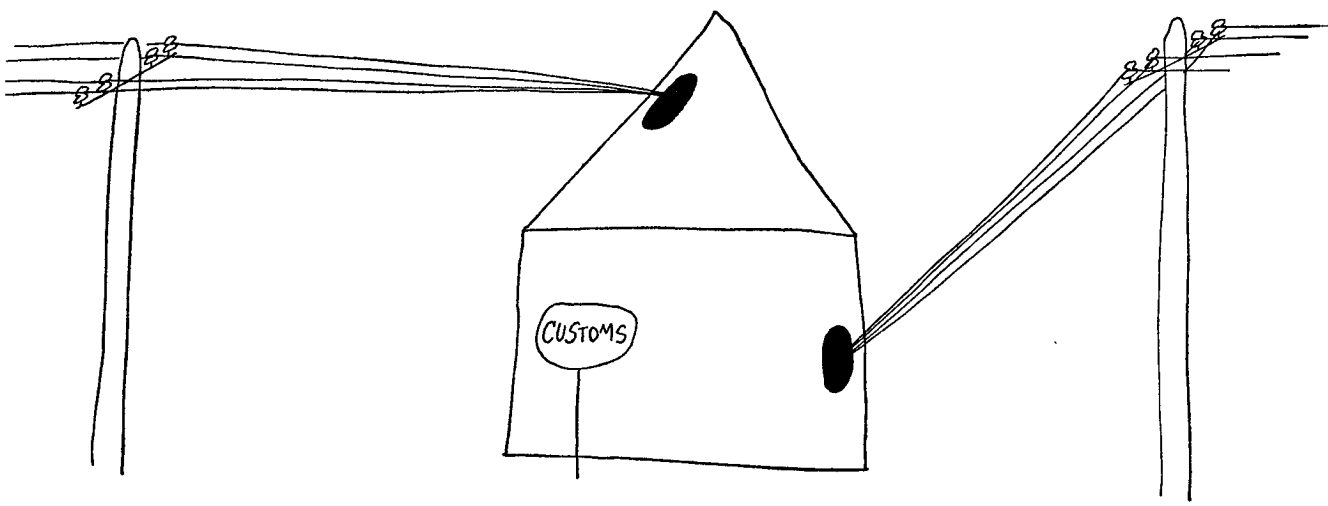

Drawings by IVAN STEIGER

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Discussion tends to centre on such "inner assumptions" of the new economy; but at the same time contact is sought with the West, even though (or, perhaps, especially because) this involves inspection of Czech factories by Western customers, the possibility of the exchange of experiences, and foreign travel. Eugen Kindler, a computer specialist, has described in *Kulturní tvorba* how foreign exchange shortages caused the Ministry to prevent him from attending a conference in Rome, and then again in Budapest, for which he had prepared papers on his work; when he was invited to attend yet another congress in Jerusalem he was asked to produce "an exact estimate of how much money the trip would ultimately save the State." He concluded: "I have now been doing research for six years. Five of these I consider to have been wasted—because I had to discover for myself what I could easily have learnt elsewhere in one year if I had been given the chance...." Some chemists have been sent for training purposes to a Basle chemical works, but going abroad for such purposes is still exceptional. A freer economy implies open frontiers. The destruction of the artisan class (which is now deplored) and the flight from the land of the whole younger generation (and this has not been compensated for by mechanisation) are developments that cannot so easily be cancelled out by reforms. Many of the old world-famous exports, *viz.*, Bata shoes or Gablonz jewellery—have been transferred abroad, after eviction or nationalisation.

The special features of the Czech economic crisis—and the problems of the human, social, and political climate necessary for far-reaching reform—exceed the limits of this report on the changing attitudes of a new generation to the future and the past. But the striking failure of "materialist" doctrine in material affairs was so acutely felt by a nation accustomed to a Central European standard of living—and had ultimately to be so openly admitted by those responsible—that these economic factors played a decisive part in the break-through of a radically new spirit.

In February 1947, I expected "a long period of co-existence" between the Communists and other parties, and that was an illusion. Today the question is whether a long period of co-existence is to be expected between the forces of inertia and those of change, and, having burnt my fingers once, I am not going to risk a prognosis a second time.

Still it would seem that a liberalising tendency remains a deep historic factor in this society. In the past such liberal forces had a share in state power, and this position has of course been completely lost under the new régime. Yet its weakness may be delusive. In 1947 there was no "liberal" or "Western" youth; too much had happened to rob them of that faith, and many of the best were convinced Communists. Today the whole system of a totalitarian Communist ideology is a dead-letter for the new generation (and not only for them). It commands obedience but no enthusiasm. The thoughts and passions of the young people are elsewhere. However one wants to define the "new Humanism," this is the true spectre that is haunting Central Europe.

It is hard to believe that the new things so closely associated with the appearance of a new generation can simply be reworked back into the old pattern of power. However ugly the chick may look, it just can't be forced back into the egg. To be sure, belonging to the Soviet sphere sets limits to possible developments—not so narrow as they seem to many today, but still limits. As its industrial production is constituted today, the country must be glad of Comecon, for in only a few instances is it capable of competing on the world market, though it used to be. Economic reforms might improve things relatively quickly, and the impediment of Soviet quantitative industrial thinking would then be felt to be oppressive (as a Minister said to me quite openly). Politically a part of the eastern *bloc*, socially and culturally a part of Central Europe and modern industrial society, Czechoslovakia is by its very situation hard-pressed to make greater progress. Is it because of this that the visitor to Prague finds a great deal of humour but little cheerfulness?

Even apart from foreign policy, it is hard indeed to find a way from rigid Stalinism to a looser form of Communism. Leadership is handicapped by chronic moral and economic difficulties. The existing political class has such a small credit balance in its favour, and old-style democracy, still unforgotten, beckons vaguely as a possible alternative. This difficulty of finding a middle position somewhere this side of a "relapse" into democracy, which is unthinkable to the régime, contributes to keeping alive so many outdated Stalinist features in the state apparatus. Elsewhere dictatorship has been explained by the backwardness of society; here it is manifestly connected with the fear of progress. The more unnecessary the dictatorship becomes, the more inert its representatives are bound to show themselves. It is a half-way position, and is everywhere felt to be untenable. Representing the new forces are a theatre and a cinema whose creations today reach world standards. That great empty pedestal that blocks the Prague horizon on the Summer Hill remains the symbol of the forces of inertia.

François Bondy

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PRESS

A Conversation with James Reston

DID YOU *in your two recent visits to South Viet Nam change your mind in any fundamental way?*

RESTON: No, I don't think so. I first went there worried about whether we could really exercise our power all the way across the Pacific Ocean and make it effective. But to see ships come into Chulai right near the shore, roll out floating docks, run the bulldozers down, and clear off a whole line of fire—this is an enormously impressive thing, these big, easy walking American kids moving into a wholly foreign situation. It seemed to me they did it much better than I imagined they could. I was rather reassured. Several months later they had moved in country, and there I saw the same kids walking in the elephant grass. They had gone to a strategy of searching the enemy and destroying him on his terms, in his country. That's now my new worry. I think we can do the first better than I thought, and I am worried about the second.

—The dedication of the soldiers may not be enough. Do you think that the objectives can be achieved, i.e. cleaning the country of the Viet Cong?

RESTON: I suppose we can do anything that we are willing to pay for. We certainly have the fire power, but it's difficult to be dogmatic. In the old days when we fought the Germans we knew we had maps of every street in every major town in Germany, we knew the cast of characters, we could base our judgment on good factual knowledge. Now I don't suppose there ever has been a war in which so many fundamental decisions have been taken on so little knowledge. We don't know. We are guessing about the intentions of the Chinese. We don't even know who is in control in Hanoi—we don't know whether it's Ho Chi Minh, or whether General Giap is still in control, or whether Shelepin coming from Moscow really influences them, or whether they are really being pushed around by the Chinese. We don't know.

—Nor do we know when we send in 20,000 more men whether North Viet Nam is then going to send down 50,000 more....

RESTON: That, of course, is the real question. It is, I suppose, the worry everybody has. But where we argue about theories, General Westmoreland has to deal with facts. How many troops can the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong supply? His estimates are maybe five, at most six, divisions and he believes he can deal with those six divisions. He believes he can search for them and find them with all kinds of new devices in aircraft: "infra red" in aircraft that picks up wherever a fire or even a hot automobile engine is operating. They can find them, but the question is after you destroy the five or six divisions, what about the next five or six? What about the five or six after that? Westmoreland is quite frank about this. He assumes they will commit everything they've got. Well, they've got an army of 400,000 men. This is the same army which fought the French for ten years, cost the French 172,000 casualties, and destroyed every officer class out of St. Cyr for generations. If that is the exercise then I think we must come back to the question: not *can* we do it but (*a*) are we willing to pay the price? and (*b*) what are the consequences in China of trying to destroy the power of North Viet Nam? That is the devilish dilemma. I don't think any honest man can be very dogmatic about it or be anything but sympathetic about the people who have to decide.

—I gather you think the American people would not put up with the sustained national haemorrhage that France went through in Indo-China.

RESTON: I don't know who would presume to speak for the American people. I don't know what they would put up with. I've had the feeling that in the past generation the American people have become very modest in their opinions. We have a lot of shouting on the side from the two extremes. But, in general, I think most people feel that these problems are so serious, so complicated, so far away that when in doubt they tend to go along with the President. I think it was true of General Eisenhower when he was in the White House, I think it was true of Kennedy. In the Berlin crises Kennedy could have, in my view, run a convoy through Helmstedt—or he could have said: well, Berlin is 110 miles inside Communist territory and you know....

JAMES RESTON *and Walter Lippmann are doubtless the two most influential political commentators on the American scene. Reston is an associate editor of the* New York Times *and a syndicated columnist who has covered the Washington scene for more than two decades. He was interviewed for American National Educational Television by* PAUL NIVEN.

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—And gotten away with it?

RESTON: There would have been shouting both ways. But I think his view would have prevailed.

—Obviously if we go to a conference table there's going to be give and take. We're going to have to make some concessions, territorial or otherwise. This would invariably subject the President, especially a Democratic President, to charges of "appeasement," "another Yalta," "giving way to the Communists," and so forth. You don't think this would be insuperable for the President?

RESTON: You're going back to the old China tragedy when the Democrats were supposed to have lost China. There is a different situation now in that, on the whole, the Republicans are not saying that the Democrats are the "war party." What they really are saying is "you are not fighting the war hard enough." Now if they had taken a different political strategy and said, rather sadly, that they thought the Democratic Party had gone "too far" and perhaps we ought to pull back and not try to "play God" with the world quite so much, maybe they would have had a better strategy. But they haven't chosen to do that, so I would have thought Johnson can do about what he wants—unless the blood-letting gets too rough.

—When the raids started early in 1965, didn't the administration hope for more results than they've had?

RESTON: Yes, I think they did. And that's always a problem that interests me. You know the glory of our country has been its optimism. It was this wonderful American feeling that the immigrant pioneer brought to the frontier—all right, there it is, this enormous continent, and we can cut down trees, and conquer it, and blend the races of the world together, and create a great society. And we did. Now we are in the process, I think, of trying to adapt that same psychology of optimism to the world. It may be the glory of our country, yet when I see it applied on the face of the world, that worries me. We thought that when we cross the 17th parallel and go into North Viet Nam, as indeed we went beyond the 38th parallel in Korea and went right up to the Yalu, that when the enemy saw the American G.I. he would run away. Well, other people are tough too, and they don't run away when people come close to their frontiers any more than we would if Communists were coming close, say, to the Rio Grande. We wouldn't do it, and they are not doing it either.

PREMIER KOSYGIN was certainly not conciliatory when you talked to him recently. We keep reading that the Russians are embarrassed over Viet Nam. The Chinese claim the Russians are asking them to get the U.S. off the hook in Viet Nam. There was no sign of embarrassment or conciliation in what Kosygin said to you. Did you feel it was a performance of toughness?

RESTON: This is guessing, you know. Again, decisions or even opinions are often based on very little information. How does one know? One guesses. I think he thought we were on the point, at that time, of bringing the Germans into the nuclear club, and he just decided to raise the level of noise. I don't think it was much more than that. I just happened to be there and he used me for that purpose. If he had wanted to do it as an act of state, the Supreme Soviet was meeting there at that time and he could have done it in a much more official and formal way. I don't think it was very important.

—On the matter of American aspirations and American performance in the world, isn't there a case for the proposition that we can be very proud of the way we've used our world supremacy over the last twenty years, that we've done a lot for the rest of the world, and that we have had some results despite Viet Nam, despite de Gaulle?

RESTON: I feel that very strongly. Because we concentrate so much on what is wrong, as in Viet Nam, we give the impression that everything is wrong. Look, for example, at how quiet Berlin is now. This is a great achievement but because it's quiet, we pay no attention to it, and Saigon becomes bigger than all the capitals of Europe and the Gulf of Tonkin becomes bigger than the Atlantic. Well, this is the way we are. Still, this American generation has maintained power in the world and taken commitments the like of which the British never did in their entire imperial reign. And we have avoided the great big war. This is something to be very proud of, I believe.

—We seem to want to be loved as well as respected, and every time somebody says the hell with the U.S. or burns a library, a lot of people say obviously foreign aid is a mistake: we are not loved. Will we ever get used to this?

RESTON: We started out to try to organise some kind of collective security system in the world whereby all countries would put in their part to defend the peace and create some kind of order. We created the UN for that purpose and all those alliances. But the basic problem in the world today is that these institutions have not worked. And what we are trying to do is to replace them. We are trying in Viet Nam to replace the South-east Asian system. We tried in the Dominican Republic to replace the Inner American system. We tried in Berlin to replace the NATO system. This is taking on an awful lot.

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And what I am worried about in Viet Nam is simply that we will try to do too much, accept the strategy of searching, finding and destroying the enemy on his terms, and in the process take such a blood-letting that the people of the country will begin to say "Now, just a minute here...." And then Johnson as a very political President will respond. Instead of holding what we can in Viet Nam, we will either try to do too much or try to make peace on terms which will lose the country, and lose the purpose of the war. Then we will be in trouble.

—I gather you're suggesting that we have to scale down our objectives, that the President has got to decide and communicate to the people the decision that we can't in the absence of a peace conference fulfil our present military objectives, that we've got to settle for something less.

RESTON: We are just at the beginning of an enormous battle for Asia, a battle which will go on for the rest of the century. Viet Nam is not the end of it but the beginning. Some people say if we lose Viet Nam, the "domino theory" will prevail and we will begin to lose all these countries. I think this is true, but I don't think the opposite of it is true. If we win in Viet Nam, the battle will still go on. What I am afraid of is that we will try to score a great smashing victory—thinking that will end it all, which it won't—take great casualties in the process, have our people rise up against that—and then instead of doing the slow thing that I believe we have to do over a generation or so, we pull out. Then we will be confronted, I think, with very serious prospects.

—During one of your recent trips to the Far East you suggested it might be a good idea for President Johnston to go out there and sit down with the Asian Heads of Government. What would be the purpose?

RESTON: Well, it would be really to say to them: "Look, we are trying to create a security system. We have held the gate here for twenty years. Now our people are willing to do this, provided they see some evidence that you and Japan, and you and India, the two great potentially powerful anchors from the Himalayas to the Sea of Japan—that you people are beginning to get in on this act. After all, this is *your* part of the world. But if you show no evidence that you are interested in defending your own part of the world, then don't ask the Americans to do it forever, because that way lies defeat for everybody. Let's remember that we are 20 years from the last war. What are you going to do?..."

—This obtains also for Europe and Latin America?

RESTON: I think that's right.

—But what happens if they say, we won't help? Do we then turn our backs on the entire undeveloped world?

RESTON: I think the purpose of government is to defend its own people. One has to do what is important to defend the interests of the United States, no matter what other people do. If that is what we are going to be confronted with, then I think we have to look at the strategic position again. Probably in that event what we would have to do is get a new line of defence, maybe the line we should have taken in the first place: that is to say, a line where we could use airpower and seapower.

—And yet every time the President gets in an argument with his advisers he says: "Just what would you do?" He has never got a satisfactory answer.

RESTON: I am trying to suggest that there is a responsibility upon those of us in journalism who presume to criticise, to try to come up with some kind of alternative. We don't have all the information they have, but we ought to try. What I am saying is that there is an alternative. There was an attack upon South Viet Nam just as there was a Communist attack upon South Korea. The purpose of our going in there was to keep that attack from prevailing. Now I believe in the perimeter of Saigon—a wide perimeter, where you have about eight to nine million people—and in the coastal areas and in most of the main provincial capitals, you have about seventy per cent of the people. I believe we can defend those areas, and secure them fairly well. You'd have to go out with airpower to keep the enemy off balance, but it's a lot different if they're attacking you when the boys out there, in that American way, are taking a walk in the sun through the elephant grass. This is a lot different. Where the enemy is entrenched and you are not entrenched, the difference in casualties between these two strategies is, I think, very great indeed. Therefore I would limit the objective. I would neither say as some of my colleagues have, "Let's go for the big blast and try to blast them out and even risk a war with China if necessary," or the other, that it's too difficult, therefore let us pull away. Because if we do that, there is no doubt in my mind as to what is going to happen. The Communists will determine this great revolutionary movement in the Pacific and we will have to deal with the consequences, we or our children. I think there is a middle way. Whether it will be done or not, I don't know. I think that's the main issue that is coming up now.

LOOKING BACK *with hindsight on the history of this commitment, was there any point at which a President should have seen the writing on the wall and got out or should, alternatively, have*

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refrained from taking one of the many steps of escalation?

RESTON: Well, I had an interesting experience just by accident with President Kennedy about that. He agreed to see me just a few minutes after the last meeting with Khrushchev at Vienna in the spring of 1961. He really had a hard time with Khrushchev—Khrushchev tried to bully him through the four meetings, and Kennedy said to me at that time that he thought he understood why Khrushchev had taken this position. He said looking back on the Bay of Pigs fiasco that Khrushchev had decided that anybody who was stupid enough to get involved in that situation was immature, and anybody who didn't see it all the way through was timid and therefore could be bullied. Kennedy said to me then: "We will never do anything with these people now, unless we make our power real to them. It must be made credible. Otherwise we'll get nowhere on anything...." And it was at that time in order to make this power credible that he came home and increased the military budget by six billion dollars; he sent the Red Arrow Division to Germany; and most important, he escalated in Viet Nam, not because the situation on the ground demanded it in Viet Nam, but he wanted the 12,000 men in Viet Nam to prove a diplomatic point, not a military point. And that, I think, is where we began to get off the track.

—Did his advisers concur in this judgment?

RESTON: No, there was a big battle about that at the time. One of his advisers said, "Don't go down that track, because once you get 12,000 men committed, you'll get into a situation in which you will keep on developing it...." And one of his other advisers said, "If you go that way, it may take 300,000 men...." Bob McNamara took the position "whatever is necessary" we ought to put in there. Then there was a real battle, because the State Department (or at least part of the State Department) said: "You must never ask the President of the United States to go all the way through in circumstances he can't foresee, because you don't know what's going to happen in the world; therefore don't commit yourself that much...." This was, in my view, one of the critical historic debates that went on. And from there we made one step after another until now we have over 200,000 men.

—If the military choices in Viet Nam are: getting out, continuing to escalate, or scaling down our objectives—is there a similar variety of diplomatic objectives?

RESTON: Well, I just went around the world trying to find out the answer to that question. Where could we look for help? Frankly, it's not very encouraging. If you go to London, they talk to you about what we're going to do for them in Southern Rhodesia. If you go to Moscow from there, they beat your ears off about Viet Nam. So on to Pakistan and India and they're complaining about the role we played on Kashmir. So to Japan and they say well, they're not very interested in getting involved. So it's not encouraging. But we went to war against the Japanese to keep Japan from controlling Asia. We've got a similar problem at the present time. We can either get out, which is one option I believe unacceptable, unthinkable, and dishonourable. Second, we can all become "hawks," and I've tried to indicate that I believe if we use all our power to try to finish this, settle things, in that nice tidy American way we like to go, that we'll get into deep trouble and it will be self-defeating. The third is the diplomatic alternative, and that is to try to build some kind of collective security system step by step over a long period of time in the Pacific. The hopes for this lie in Japan, at the north of the perimeter from the Sea of Japan to the Indian Ocean, and at the bottom, India. These are the two great hopes. But they're not immediate hopes, and the question is: how can we hold the fort with acceptable losses until the day comes when we can put together some kind of collective security system? We cannot, allied as we now are with five per cent of the Asian people, make that a viable thing by using all our power to support South Korea, Chiang Kai-shek in Formosa, etc. Going that way and getting into a really big war in Viet Nam, I don't think is the answer. The middle way is the only hope.

WE'VE SPENT a lot of last year writing about the extraordinary productivity of the Congress under this President. To what extent was the demand for "the Great Society" building up over the years and to what extent did Mr. Johnson do it himself?

RESTON: I think it was a mixture of history and sentiment. The death of Kennedy had produced a kind of self-searching in the country, about what had gone wrong, about the streak of violence in the country that ended in this ghastly tragedy. For a while there was a desire to try to put things right. Perhaps this is too psychological. Then there had been the groundwork prepared by Kennedy and the argument in the press, and then playing upon these two things, came this extraordinary political animal, Lyndon Johnson.

—His intimate knowledge of the Congress certainly had a great deal to do with it.

RESTON: Oh, yes, enormous. You see, I think

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the difference was that this man knew the deck. He knew the Congress the way a poker player knows the value of cards. He had lived with these people for thirty-two years. He had gone to all their weddings, and he had been there when their kids were born, and he had drunk whisky with them, and he knew all the problems of their constituencies—who they were going to run against and a lot of other things that not only gave him knowledge, but knowledge that gave him power. I think this probably was the essence of it. And then there was the enormous difference of the techniques of the two men.

—But he carried over many of his techniques from the Senate. You remember when he was Majority Leader, he used to sit in a room full of reporters and say, "You boys accuse me of"—he'd look in his hands and say, "You boys accuse me of influencing other senators' votes, telling them how to vote. Now I never do that." Did he really believe this? Did he really expect us *to believe it?*

RESTON: Oh, he didn't believe it, and I don't think he expected you to believe it, but that's his way of doing things. If you say something about Lyndon Johnson—you print, say, that he is terribly good at domestic policy but he is not very good at foreign policy—right away the one thing he wants to do is prove what you said against him is not true. If you said he couldn't fly from here to the Washington Monument, you know, he'd get up on the roof and start flapping his arms. He just wants everything. He wants, you know, to be loved, but he wants to achieve whatever he sets out to achieve.

—He doesn't only want to be considered the most effective President in history, he wants to be the most beloved. I'm not sure that he ever will be, are you?

RESTON: No, I don't think he will. He may be the most effective. But affection I don't think he will get.

—Maybe the very qualities which make him an effective President are going to deprive him of affection.

RESTON: I think that's true. Every once in a while I have a feeling that the federal system is so rough, and so many different savage forces are operating from regions and states and interests all over the place, that the only kind of man who can really make it work is a man who really does know the deck and is really tough. This is not an operation for nice guys. This is a tough system.

—One of his aides was ridiculed some time ago for saying in a speech that Mr. Johnson had special antennae which would permit him to know the moods and thoughts of the American people even without going out and talking to them. There must be something to that, isn't there? Doesn't he have a strange rapport with the electorate?

RESTON: Yes, I think he does. You know in talking about this whole thing with friends in Europe, I've always been interested in their attitude—they always say, "Well, we liked Kennedy, but we don't like Johnson." The Europeans liked Kennedy because he wasn't a typical American. Kennedy's America was bounded by Boston to Washington to New York to Palm Beach. I suppose he crossed the Atlantic more than he crossed the Allegheny Range—from the time I first saw him, when his father brought him to London in 1937, until he was finally killed. But Johnson is a trans-Appalachian man. I think if you could pick the five best reporters in Washington and put them in one room and get them to put down on a piece of paper what Lyndon Johnson's qualities are, and then picked the five best sociologists in America and let them go in another room and define the primary qualities of the American people, and then put these two pieces of paper together they wouldn't be far apart. Now maybe both the American people and Lyndon Johnson would resent that analogy, but I believe it to be true.

—On the other hand, he certainly has an intelligence far above the run of the mill, does he not?

RESTON: This is one, I think, one of the great misconceptions about Johnson, that because he is not intellectual he is not intelligent. He is an enormously intelligent man.

—And he's always had great respect for the intellectual life even though he hasn't been a part of it.

RESTON: Well, a kind of love-hate for it. I think he resents it. I suppose it's all right for me to tell this story now; it's an interesting bit of history. During the campaign of '64 there was talk about Bobby Kennedy running for Vice-President. It was just before the Atlantic City convention and at that time there had been a big story in one of the papers about Johnson driving his car at ninety miles an hour, down in Texas, drinking a cup of beer. I was talking to him that day he read an account of this in *Time* magazine. "You know," he said, "we are talking about the wrong thing. The question is not whether Bobby Kennedy should run for the Vice-Presidency. The question is whether I will run again." And I said, "Are you kidding?"

—He was that depressed?

RESTON: He was so depressed, and then he said a most moving thing. "You know, I want to do only one thing as President. I want to try to unite the American people but," he said, "I

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don't know whether we are far enough away from Appomattox that a Southern President can really unite the people of this country, particularly against this big eastern intellectual press. They're trying to cut me up. . . ." I think it a very sad story, but I think it reveals something of this feeling about intellectuals.

—It is true that he would never have obtained the office except by accident, is it not?

RESTON: Oh, I think that's right. Yes, he never would have.

—Is that taboo gone now, along with the Catholic taboo?

RESTON: I would think so. It's not wholly gone, because it depends on the man. But I think it's easier now that it's been broken.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO *if you were charged with the responsibility of winning the next election or the next after that for the Republican Party? How would you start to rebuild it?*

RESTON: I've got enough problems without thinking much about that. I think it's an enormous task because for the past five or six years the Republican Party has been concentrating on the themes of rural America. And since a million people are going off the land every single year, this is a wasting asset for them. They have to get down and grapple with the problems of the cities, and I would have thought that the only thing they could do is learn something from what the British Conservatives did.

—Struggle within the Republican Party is often between politicians who know better what the people want and the businessmen who are often trying to drive the Party to the right. Why is it that American businessmen who were so extraordinarily progressive and courageous in their businesses are so often unrealistically out of touch?

RESTON: I think you have to draw a distinction between the small businessman and the big international businessman. The people around the Committee for Economic Development—for example, Philip Reed, and before he went to the UN, Paul Hoffman at Studebaker—these men presided over world-wide companies, and they were world-minded men. Today more and more businesses are really making the difference between profit and loss in the export markets. Nevertheless what you say is true. Businessmen plan every model of an automobile or every product from toothpaste to talcum powder very carefully. And yet—damn the government for planning.

—But you say that the way for the Party to come back is to find out what ordinary people are thinking and identify with them. Assuming that there is a consensus on the side of Mr. Johnson and the Great Society, what areas of disagreement can the Republican Party carve out in, say, the next election campaign or the congressional election campaign? Where is he vulnerable? Where is the welfare state vulnerable?

RESTON: The big issue, I think, is going to be Viet Nam, of course.

It's a difficult one for them because they've chosen to be more hawkish than the Democrats. All in all they have a tremendous problem because it's very difficult to argue with success. After all, we've had five full years of the greatest peace-time boom in the history of this country. So you can argue with the theory of the Welfare State and you can argue against the theory of Keynesian economics, but if it has done to the gross national product and the prosperity and profits and employment of the country what it has done, it's very hard to pick up many votes on that.

—Not only has Mr. Johnson dominated, even overwhelmed the political scene, but it sometimes seems as if there's a kind of gradual diminution of dissent as such in the country. Is it possible that the growth of central government in its influence is promoting orthodoxy and suppressing dissent in the ferment of new ideas?

RESTON: I wonder if your premise is correct. I've had the feeling that, in the past year, Mr. Johnson's theory about consensus is beginning to get beat up around the edges. Certainly he never was very popular with the intellectual community of the country, and the intellectual community is certainly in much more savage opposition to him now than it was a year ago. The way in which he dealt with the aluminium price question and rise in steel prices has also caused him some trouble with the business community.

—As much now as Mr. Kennedy's steel prices?

RESTON: No, I don't think so. You see, Kennedy was really a critic of the capitalist system. Johnson might criticise it or change it or modify it in his political manoeuverings but he would no more attack the capitalist system the way Kennedy implied, for example, in his famous Yale speech than he'd attack the Methodist Church. He just wouldn't do it.

—You say his consensus is wearing around the edges. Can you imagine Mr. Johnson in good health, barring of course total disaster in Viet Nam or some unpredicted catastrophe elsewhere, being defeated in 1968?

RESTON: Oh, no, I think it's very very unlikely that he would. The tradition in this country is to let a President stay in two terms, even if things are not going too well. Unless he got into deep, deep trouble in Viet Nam, with the kind

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of boom the economy has had, I should think he's all right.

—There's been no movement anywhere in the country to repeal the two-term amendment yet. Do you think that any of his friends will try to do that about 1970?

RESTON: I don't think so. No, I don't think there's much chance of that. Even he may have had enough of the Presidency by that time.

I'D LIKE *to turn next to the question of the role of the press in Washington and in our society about which you have been writing and thinking for the last twenty years. You often have the experience of having a government official—or occasionally even the President—ask you not to publish a story which he has just given you or which you picked up independently. Is this a difficult decision to make every time? What is your rule of thumb?*

RESTON: It's not really a thing that happens very often. It has happened that you're actually asked to suppress, but then usually in a military situation—in the last two years two or three times, in the Cuban crises, first the Bay of Pigs and then the missile affair.

—Surely when you go out to dinner with a government official or a group of diplomats, a lot of the conversation might make news but you don't write it. How do you decide?

RESTON: In the first place, I don't really believe in the theory of gathering information in a town like this at dinner parties. I know some people think this is a good way to do it. I don't. If I did, the following morning I would check with the source and make sure that it was in a professional context that I was gathering news and not in a social. As to deciding, I don't decide these things at all. My job is to gather all the information I can for the *Times*. I transmit that information to the paper just the way an ambassador transmits information to the State Department. What's done with it is not for me to say. I'm merely an instrument, a reporter of information for the paper.

—Is there danger that a top-ranking Washington correspondent will become too engaged and become almost part of the Establishment?

RESTON: A great danger. You know, you see people struggling with the kind of questions you and I have been talking about—what to do about Viet Nam, what to do about all these agonising things? After all, these are human beings that pull on their pants one leg at a time just the way you and I do. And if you are close to them, you can't help but get sympathetic with their problems. Once you do that, how can you do an objective job of reporting? You've got to stay away.

—Does that mean when a good friend who happens to be in government says what would you *do in this situation, you have to withdraw yourself?*

RESTON: Oh, no. It's not that black and white. But as a general proposition it's just not getting deeply involved. One Washington correspondent, Edwin Leahy, always used to say sooner or later all the big shots in this town come to grief because they violate "Leahy's Law"—and Leahy's law is that sooner or later everybody gets to the point where they are what they merely represent. When they begin to take themselves seriously, then they're in trouble. I think the main point is to have a philosophy about it—realise that you're only here for a little while to try to pass on what you can gather, and not take yourself too seriously. Take the story seriously but not yourself. That at least is my view of it.

—You've been very zealous about the right of the Press to inquire. You've answered many government criticisms. But I'd like you to put yourself in the position of a government official. Suppose if when you'd been running the New York Times *Bureau here, your every disagreement with a colleague, your every discussion as to whether to hire or fire somebody had been on the front page of the* Times *the next day. Wouldn't you find life pretty uncomfortable? Wouldn't you get mad?*

RESTON: Yes, I'd have been very irritated, but I'm not in public life. They don't have to get into public life. This is the public business that they're engaged in. I'm not engaged in public business. I would be irritated, I admit, and I feel sympathy for them. But as Harry Truman said, if they can't stand the heat they ought to stay out of the kitchen. They don't have to be in public life.

—Mr. Johnson has complained about speculation on his appointments. His press secretary said recently that it's very difficult when these lists appear; the front runner becomes the target for attack, and it may become difficult or impossible to appoint him. And those who were mentioned as possibilities for appointment for a post and don't get in, then go home and face disappointed wives. Have you any sympathy for this frustration?

RESTON: Sure. I have sympathy for disappointed wives. But no, frankly, I don't really. Basically, I think the problem in Washington is not too much aggressive reporting but too little. Let me give you an example. The government is involved in issues of war and peace, as in the case of the attack by the North Vietnamese on our warships in the Gulf of Tonkin. Within twelve hours, President Johnson put a resolution before the Congress asking for a virtual blank check to take any military action he deemed necessary for the defence of the entire South-east Asian area. As soon as he did that, there was nothing the

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Press could do at that point. There was nothing really that Congress could do except either accept it or repudiate him in the face of the enemy. Now there's a new dimension here, it seems to me, for the Press. If there's to be any real debate in the country before Presidential power does almost anything it likes, I think we've got to submarine in there, and try to find out what is going on. So while I admit it's very irritating and I would feel about myself the way they feel about me, which is not very pleasantly, nevertheless, I think our job is to keep probing, and keep exposing the information in a democratic system.

—You want more interpretative reporting then, not less?

RESTON: I want more assertive reporting. As things get more and more complex the reporter also has to do more and more interpreting. We can't compete as reporters with television's square eye. If I go out now to write a descriptive story about, say, a Presidential inauguration, how can I compete with this machine that sees the tears on Jackie Kennedy's cheeks? We can't compete in the same way. We have to do things; we have to deal with ideas to interpret thoughts and movements of policy, all things which the camera can't get on to. Our job is changing, and has been forced to change by modern developments.

—Your own paper is involved accordingly. I presume that you come closer to giving opinions in your columns than anybody in the Times *did twenty years ago. Isn't that true?*

RESTON: I think that's right. Although even in the news columns there's a great deal more interpretation now than there would have been twenty years ago.

—Do you think that the Press as a whole here lives up to its job? Does it do enough in Washington?

RESTON: No, I don't think we live up to our job. But there's one thing that I think ties all these matters we've been talking about together. The history of the U.S.A. has changed so much that all institutions—the Press, the television, the church, the Congress—everything has had to change its habits of thought and mind so fast, all within a single generation; and of course we haven't kept up. The pace of history is so swift that it would be surprising for somebody like myself who started out as a sports writer learning the old techniques of the county court house, the police court type of reporting, to go from then to now in portly middle age doing a totally different job in a totally different age. Of course you're influenced by habits of the past. All these institutions have the same problem.

—You've always taken great satisfaction in your profession—and you've even said that the 20th century is "the Century of the Journalist." President Kennedy took a different view. He tried his hand at it after the war and he quickly decided that being "an observer" was not the same thing as "having a piece of the action." He wanted an activist role. I take it you disagree.

RESTON: I didn't disagree for him because that was what he wished to do. He wished to move events. I'm perfectly happy in reporting and interpreting events. I've got one son who is in journalism, and I hope the other two go into it. Now, many newspaper people don't feel that way, but I do. I think it's a wonderful profession.

The Situation

For it was that the cousins never came,
And so we could not know what they were like.
They never did walk out in their overwhelming way
To stand by the streaming water-butt, or
To hold the fence with their girls' adult hands.
This garden can't be remembered having them laughing,
So they remain a possibility:
That after our disappointment with man
And with our dogs and with travel and with remaining still,
From our last armchairs we shall come to know
That there are the cousins left, who—that day—
Were to come, and did not, and are there to be tried yet.

Alan Brownjohn

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LETTERS

The N. Y. Times—"and Socko!"

UNTIL Mr. Henry Fairlie dignified it with the trouble of a critical analysis, nobody (not even a M. Jourdain *de nos jours*) ever thought that what the New York *Times* was written in was ever considered by anybody to be PROSE. As I was reading Fairlie's mild strictures (ENCOUNTER, June) I found the following sentence in a N.Y. *Times* dispatch from Saigon:

> "...And so, as the war grinds on and monsoon clouds mount overhead like leaden mushrooms, the political crunch shapes up."

Almost everything in the N.Y. *Times* shapes up like leaden mushrooms, poetry as well as prose. When the *Times* the other day was caught in a howling misquotation of *"Stone walls do not a prison make,"* it pleaded "the exigencies of linotype spacing." "Not ignorance of the Lovelace phrasing," ran the explanation, "but space captivity compelled scrambling the ode."

Loveless phrasing would be nearer the mark, and mindless phrasing as well. Surely one of the most important elementary facts about post-war Eastern Europe is the distinction between Communism and Socialism: especially in East Germany, where the ruling S.E.D. Party liquidated the Social Democrats. Still, the N.Y. *Times* could announce on its front page (April 12) over a dispatch from its correspondent in Dresden:

> EAST GERMANS ADAPT
> TO RULE BY SOCIALISTS

The story continued on to page 3, by which time the *Times* was a little less sure about the political crunch shaping up, and the headline became:

> EAST GERMANS LEARN TO ACCEPT LIFE
> UNDER COMMUNISM AFTER TWENTY YEARS

So does a hundred years of Marxism get rewritten because of the exigencies of linotype spacing.

In fact, anything that mounts overhead like an idea comes out in the N.Y. *Times* like a leaden mushroom. It sent one of its reporters recently to cover a conference of philosophers, and this was the news that was fit for the linotype to print (27 April):

> "...all the participants agreed that the theory of the alienation of man from society and from himself was central to Marx's entire philosophy. Their reason was that the need to solve the problem of elimination invites a revolutionary transformation of society."

Or as Holmes might have said, "Alimentary, Dr. Watson!"

There is no mistaking in the *Times* the symptoms of a serious intestinal disorder, a kind of cultural constipation. Some time ago, when the distinguished Swiss Protestant theologian, Dr. Karl Barth, delivered a series of lectures at the University of Chicago, the Middle Western correspondent for the N.Y. *Times* reported the following:

> "...One of those in the audience was Miss Esther Bentz, admissions director for graduate studies at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Mich., who had stopped on her way to Kansas City to hear Dr. Barth.
>
> Another was the Rev. James Smith, chaplain of Drury College, Springfield, Mo. Explaining his trip to Chicago, he said Dr. Barth had 'dominated the theological scene for the last forty-five years.'
>
> 'I would have travelled farther than Chicago to hear him,' said Dr. John Cotner, dean of students at Olivet Nazarene College in Kankakee, Ill.
>
> 'He is a great theologian of our day,' said Wijo Kang, a Korean graduate student at the University of Chicago. 'Christians have a responsibility to hear what he says.'"

Alas, the N.Y. *Times* has been dominating the journalistic scene for the last forty-five years, and New Yorkers at least have a responsibility (in the near-monopolistic situation, certainly no alternative) to read what it says. But how many hundreds of thousands of us would travel farther than Chicago, farther even than Kankakee and Berrien Springs, to avoid it?—to avoid reading about "arresting" stage-plays that are always "searing tragedy," about performances that are "luminous with fervour and honesty," about directors who are "eminently deserving of all the critical kudos bestowed," about "lines that sparkle with freshness of insight" and "affecting passages of barely articulated tenderness." And, when once in a leaden monsoon there is a break away from this language of Manhattan Mandarin, this is the kind of beat Broadway rhythms that emerge from the *Times'* music critic:

> "Isaac Stern likes to play chamber music. So does Leonard Rose. So does Eugene Istomin. So what more natural than these three American instrumentalists get together and form a trio?... On the evidence heard last night (at Carnegie Hall) Messrs. Stern, Rose and Istomin can play together with the best of them. There should be no reason why not. Each is a sincere musician. Each is an instrumentalist of superior capacities. As a trio they work together like the musicians they are. Nobody wants to steal the show, there is no 'star,' and each is technician enough to handle anything that comes his way...."

If only one could skip reading all those searing, luminous, sparkling, affecting exercises in Non-English and confine oneself to reading only the headlines! But, alas, this is the kind of headline we can get in our New York *Times* over our morning coffee:

> IN THE NATION
>
> "Oh, Can't I?" Asked Henry Cabot Lodge When He Was a Young Political Reporter—And Socko!

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And again:

THE LAST ACT IN GENEVA

Key Issue Now Appears to Be: "Who Is Going to Put Monkey on Whose Back?"

So what more natural than we go into spiritual exile and inner emigration and try subscribing to the *Mainichi Shimbun*? Alas for us poor New Yorkers in what Albee called "the American zoo" —the New York *Times* is the monkey on our back.

LESTER MATTHEWS

New York City

Eros vs. Pornos

THAT DEBATE about what Mr. George Steiner insists on calling pornography (and which I insist should not be given such a misleading definition if the exchange is to produce any intelligible results), that debate has given me a fantasy of being on the stage of the *Sade-Marat* production helplessly sitting in the tin tub, blithely mouthing forth my republican theorems, whereas the *divine Marquis* (who is none else but Mr. Steiner himself) sits hieratically nearby presiding over the tragedy and directing me with slow but sure precision towards my inescapable end, the graceful dagger. I admit that my fantasy bears the stamp of mischief. To picture George Steiner under the traits of the abominable Marquis, even if only in my imagination, is certainly a brutal aggression on his privacy. But I can't help it; to me the likeness is striking: the absolutist theories, the sulphurous logic, it's all there.

In my [ENCOUNTER, February] article, *The Erotic Society*, I attempted to give a constructive and intelligible answer to his earlier essay, *High Pornography and Human Privacy*, [ENCOUNTER, October 1965] but I am painfully aware of the fact that when he formulated his reply to my article, he had entirely misunderstood it, or misread it. Fortunately Mr. Jacques Barzun has come to the rescue of logic and fair play in his own study, *Venus at Large* [ENCOUNTER, March], and his contribution to the subject is certainly helpful and well-informed. This intervention in the debate revives my hope it may lead somewhere after all.

George Steiner speaks of my "failure to grasp or to face the real problem," which he then proceeds "to restate briefly." But he defines it in a manner differing completely from his earlier exposé, which said: erotic imagery, as it appears in modern literature, trespasses on our individual freedom by superimposing on our consciousness feelings and desires which are alien to our own individual erotic genius; thus it constitutes an attack on our freedom. The argument was original, if nothing else, and it was not devoid of a certain poetic charm. The new exposé says (and how shrilly!): by accepting freedom of expression, by suppressing censorship, we will let sadism penetrate the masses; we will encourage bestiality; we will cause our children to be torn to pieces by the Nazis, the Komintern, or by Mr. Burroughs. A couple recently convicted of sex crimes are said to have owned copies, or to have read copies of de Sade's novels. *Ergo*, it is de Sade's influence which is the true cause of those sadistic excesses, and Girodias is responsible. . . . Semantics never had it so easy.

In our society, the problem is not de Sade and his influence: it is freedom, and we can only be *for* or *against*. I will immediately amend this by adding that total freedom is necessarily a utopia in the present state of things; but that utopia has governed the political thought, the behaviour, and the very life of our ancestors for centuries. That utopia has governed the growth and definition of our society. Even if the notion is constantly disfigured in political strife and by the weight of common prejudice, the genuine purpose of our movement forward is *freedom*. Moral, mental, and political freedom are all corollary and complementary. Censorship has been consistently used under strong régimes to break down the moral fibre of the masses, to impose discipline and to oblige the people to look upon the state as all-powerful and all-providing. What is true today of the Spanish, Portuguese, Russian or Chinese régimes was true also of the Victorian society, and, even earlier, of the feudal systems.

In a modern society, freedom is not only a goal but also a basic condition for individual and collective survival. It implies a total elimination of the old system of morals, the definition of a new code of ethics adapted to contemporary living conditions, a new formulation of our aesthetics—and the acceptance of eroticism as one of the genuine motivations of human life.

I am not going to discuss Mr. Steiner's taste in literature. If he wants to discuss the respective merits of *Tropic of Cancer* and *Dr. Zhivago*, I see no objection to his wasting time in such a futile exercise. But I certainly deny him the right to cause *Tropic of Cancer* to be suppressed by the censors simply because he, George Steiner, thinks that *Dr. Zhivago* is a better, cleverer, and more refined novel.

Nor am I going to question Mr. Steiner's credentials; but I must emphatically protest against his methods. When he defines a book such as *The Gaudy Image* (which he has not read) as a piece of "two-penny sadism," he is not only committing a gratuitous injustice against an excellent novel whose only fault is that it is not famous: he is deliberately attracting public attention to that book in a derogatory manner. He is calling in the police. He is causing scandal, and then, presumably, he will invoke the scandal he started as a justification for some act of censorship.

Mrs. Grundy was a frightening character because she was entirely deprived of a sense of humour. Does Mr. Steiner have a sense of humour?

MAURICE GIRODIAS

Paris

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Oxford

THE OXFORD *bookseller Sir Basil Blackwell has had a cri de coeur from the Rev. B. L. M. Embree of the Taiwan Theological College in China, whose books are fast being devoured by cockroaches.*

Unfortunately the cockroaches prefer British books (they don't like the glue Americans use) and their favourite food is books bound in dark blue or dark red cloth.

"Is there any hope," Mr. Embree wants to know, "that publishers may find it possible to stop catering to the appetites of our cockroaches?"

DAILY MAIL

New York

A RELIGIOUS WORK *was on last night's New York Philharmonic programme. Bach's* St. John Passion *occupied the entire evening. The* New Testament *was rewritten for the occasion. The Gospel According to St. John has a good deal to say about the part of the Jews in the crucifixion. But the Philharmonic was not going to offend anybody's feelings. Every time the word "Jew" came up in Bach's text, another word was substituted*—Leute, *or* Volk, *or the equivalent. Instead of* "Jesus von Nazareth, der Juden König," *we had* Jesus von Nazareth, des Volkes König—*"King of the People" instead of "King of the Jews."*

NEW YORK TIMES

Moscow

A VOLUME OF VERSE *by the late Boris Pasternak has just been published here in an edition of 100,000 copies. The new volume omits the poems from Pasternak's Nobel Prize-winning novel,* Dr. Zhivago. *It also lacks the long introduction to a previous edition written by Andrei Sinyavsky, the Moscow literary critic who was sentenced to seven years' hard labour in February for publishing "anti-Soviet" works under a pseudonym in the West.*

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE

Adelaide

THE CENSORSHIP *laws were heavily criticised at a symposium of 70 leading Australian authors and poets in Adelaide today. All the speakers called for a drastic revision. Dr. J. J. Bray, Q.C., a poet, said: "So-called delinquents with whom the police and politicians profess to be concerned do not read serious literature. I know of no case of any sinner who has seriously ascribed his downfall to reading Ovid, D. H. Lawrence, James Joyce or other such writers."*

DAILY TELEGRAPH

East Berlin

THE DEPUTY MINISTER *of Culture in East Germany, Herr Gunter Witt, has got himself into trouble for allowing the issue of two films which express a careful and reserved criticism of Stalinism,* The Rabbit—That's Me *and* Don't Think—Howl. *Witt, under heavy fire from high-ranking comrades, admitted his backsliding in a piece of self-criticism reminiscent of the Stalinist era.*

KURT HAGEN: *"Comrade Witt, surely you knew that the book,* The Rabbit—That's Me, *had not been allowed?"*

WALTER ULBRICHT: *"The book was not licensed by the Ministry."*

ALEXANDER ABUSCH: *"It was practically a forbidden book."*

WITT: *"I must say that I permitted a distortion of our policy and that I allowed the possibility of the building up of opposition to the party among the intellectuals."*

ULBRICHT: *"The only question is this. Are we of the opinion that a few artists and authors should write what they want and be in a position to determine the development of our entire society? That's the question, and you said 'Yes' and the Politburo said 'No.' That's the difference between us."*

WITT: *"I didn't express the correct attitude to the Politburo. That's quite clear to me now."*

HERMANN AXEN: *"Poison the people first and then remove the poison afterwards?"*

THE GUARDIAN

Paris

"MY PERFORMANCE *as Oscar Wilde in New York," Robert Morley said, "established my American reputation. Everyone was very kind, except Mrs. Frank Harris. After the play had had a long and prosperous run she sued the authors for plagiarism, contending that they had taken some of Wilde's conversation from her husband's biography.*

"The defence claimed that the conversations were Wilde's and therefore could be used. But Mrs. Harris on the stand denied this. 'Why, my husband was the most notorious liar of the twentieth century,' said she. She was awarded an enormous sum on the strength of such frankness."

NEW YORK TIMES

Beirut

A DUPLICATED COPY *of an English translation of Saint Thomas Aquinas' "Summa Contra Gentiles" caused the arrest at 3 a.m. yesterday of a member of the faculty of the American University of Beirut under an order of expulsion.*

The offending translation included two paragraphs in which the 13th-century Christian philosopher attacked Islam and the prophet Mohammed. The material was part of the course which included works by Plato, Aristotle, Ibn Khaldun, and the Bible.

NEW YORK TIMES

London

THE *Paul Hamlyn Group, a new multi-million publishing house, believes and has proved, that books* can *be sold like soap. This may make the "gnomes of Bloomsbury" very cross. "Books may be different, but they are not that different," says Mr. Hamlyn.*

PRESS CONFERENCE

Washington

PRESIDENT JOHNSON *and his staff have taken to talking about "commitment" as if they were all involved in some personal existential struggle. Do they sit around at the Pentagon reading Clausewitz or Sartre? (Neither, probably.)*

NEW STATESMAN

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1. I HAVE READ *The Gaudy Image* (why shouldn't I have done so?). From this rather shoddy novel *The Olympia Reader* reprints and illustrates a particularly sadistic and nauseating excerpt. It is Mr. Girodias who is calling loud attention to this element in the novel, not I.

2. I have a sense of humour, and it delights, for example, in *Fanny Hill*, in *Candy*, in *The Ginger Man*. It does not, I readily admit, extend to the laughter or amusement *The Olympia Reader* would have us find in interminable scenes of flagellation, torture, methodical degradation and sexual humiliation. And the statistical fact that a very large proportion of erotica is firmly based on sadism does seem to me to raise more general complex issues.

3. Mr. Girodias calls for the formulation of a new code of ethics, for a new aesthetics, for "a total elimination of the old system of morals." I think I agree—though I am not wholly certain of his exact meaning. I too think we must re-define values and possibilities of language and action if we are to emerge from the present phase of cheapness and barbarism. But what does *The Olympia Reader*, with its clichés of post-romantic sadism and sheer mass of bad writing, contribute to renewal? Where is the laughter, where the liberation?

4. My argument is founded throughout on a sense of present history, on the belief that considerable, and little understood, energies of violence and contempt for the human person are abroad. We live after Auschwitz and in the face of fantastic overcrowding, urban anomie, and potentialities of mass hysteria. The erotic/pornographic bias of much contemporary western literature, its insistence on graphic sadism, its scorn for any privacy of expression or imagining, seem to me to add to the general force of the inhuman. Perhaps literature is "above" moralistic or political query. From Plato on there are those who have not thought so, or not been confident. I am not calling for censorship. I am almost certain that the condemnation of *Eros* by the United States Supreme Court—and of *Saved* by the Lord Chamberlain in London—are indefensible stupidities. But I suspect that those who advocate "total freedom to publish" have not even begun to understand the effects which their trash and brutality may have upon feeling and behaviour in our crowded society—or that they care. Censorship is an ugly, stupid thing; that which it seeks to combat is often no less so. And I am saying that there is not very much in *The Olympia Reader* to represent serious literature or to justify a Miltonic debate over absolute values.

5. Which brings me to my last point. Mr. Girodias has published some superb books. His imprint and discernment are inseparable from some of the best, most radical achievements in post-war prose. Of these *The Olympia Reader* gives only a fragmentary or deliberately cheapened notion. It indicts The Olympia Press as nothing I have said or would wish to say, does. That is one of the saddest parts of the whole venture.

GEORGE STEINER

Cambridge

The Innocent Libel

By SIR LINTON ANDREWS

LORD SHAWCROSS, like Lord Devlin, Chairman of the Press Council, deserves the title of Lord Protector of the Press. His article "The Shadow of the Law," in the March issue of ENCOUNTER, was by no means the first conspicuous evidence of his sympathy with hard-pressed, public-spirited journalists and his desire to liberalise newspaper law in order to lighten their harassments. If I, as an editor emeritus, sometimes question one or two points in his advice and in his legislative proposals it is not in querulous opposition, but in the hope of making his plans for the Press completely workable, and, to the public, with its many critics of newspaper methods, completely acceptable.

Mr. Cecil King, head of the giant International Publishing Corporation, has expressed pithily the legal problem that weighs most heavily on the Press. Writing in the annual report on the Press Council issued in 1962, he said: "The British law of libel is an absolute nightmare to editors and working journalists. It is full of pitfalls even for the most cautious, where honesty of purpose is no protection."

Mr. H. A. Taylor, the only journalist who served throughout on the Lord Chancellor's Committee on the Law of Defamation, from 1939 to 1948, has condemned the libel law as too harsh. In particular (as he says in the newspaper-man's magazine, *WPN and Advertisers' Review*, for 11 February 1966), he "cannot see the punitive element in libel damages as anything but a crude anomaly." Sometimes a jury has awarded such heavy damages as to punish the kind of journalism before it, perhaps

SIR LINTON ANDREWS *edited the* Yorkshire Post *for 21 years from 1939 and the* Leeds Mercury *for 16 years from 1923. He was president of the Institute of Journalists in 1946, chairman of the Press Council from 1955 to 1959, and president of the Guild of British Newspaper Editors in 1952–3. His books include "Problems of an Editor" and "The Autobiography of a Journalist."*

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because it disapproved of a paper's political views, its strident make-up, or its appeal to an unruly populace, whereas the jurymen's duty was to decide whether the plaintiff had been defamed and if so what damage he had suffered and what would be suitable pecuniary reparation.

The journalism of exposure—a striking example was *The People*'s carefully gathered evidence of bribery among professional footballers—has come into renewed favour and is still spreading. Not all readers like this kind of enterprise, though it serves the common good. Old-fashioned citizens may well be among jurymen investigating an alleged libel arising out of such probing into a social ill. They might well think it their business to show strong disapproval of papers not run quite like *The Times*, the *Daily Telegraph*, or *The Guardian*. They ought to be restrained from penalising a paper merely or mainly because it is not of the class they prefer for themselves. What they favour or dislike may be a question of individual taste not of necessary propriety.

So dark is the shadow of the libel law that one of the very first cautions given to a trainee journalist is: "*If in doubt, leave out.*" He is also usually told, "*The greater the truth, the greater the libel.*" This used to puzzle me greatly. The point is that if you have written something outspoken about fellow-citizens which you have every reason to believe is true but cannot prove to a jury you are indeed courting trouble. How often an editor has said to me and how often I have said to others, "Could you go into a witness-box and prove the truth of what you have written? Could, and *would*, your informants do so too?" The result is that many a report which it would have been for the public benefit to print has been spiked or tossed into the wastepaper basket.

Lord Shawcross once gave this advice to journalists in cases where the law seems in doubt: "Publish and be damned!" Unfortunately you may publish with the result not of a minor damnation but dauntingly heavy damages. A better suggestion from Lord Shawcross is the one he has elaborated in Encounter that the Press in libel cases should be allowed the defence of qualified privilege. This would recognise the duty of the Press to publish matters of public concern or interest, to do so in good faith and without malice, and to base those matters upon evidence which might reasonably have been believed to be true. Further, in order to benefit by the proposed defence, the newspaper must have published on request a reasonable letter or statement by way of explanation or contradiction and must have withdrawn and apologised for anything shown to be inaccurate.

Would this extension of qualified privilege do away with the haunting uncertainties of libel law fulfilment? It might lessen such uncertainties, but in lessening its harshness to the Press might not the law impose hardship on some private citizens? Lord Shawcross' concluding words in his article are ominous: "Newspapers generally take care to prevent the publication of anything untrue. When they act in good faith and with a true sense of public responsibility they should be protected if occasionally they go wrong." This doctrine could be dangerous. It protects the innocent libeller but not the innocent victim, who may suffer heavily, even if he does get a correction and apology in the offending paper. Lord Shawcross would say, "Yes, but this is one of those cases where the general advantage far outweighs the occasional particular inconvenience."

Much as I should like to see the Press freed from the libel nightmare described by Mr. Cecil King, I do not want a maligned citizen to be deprived of redress. The principle of the libel law is fair. It is its misuse that we journalists want to stop. It is gold-diggers we want to stop. It is grotesquely inflated damages that trouble us most. Lord Shawcross, whose Encounter article contained much judicial wisdom, is on the firmest ground when he doubts whether juries are the best tribunals to settle questions of what is defamatory in particular cases, whether there has been malice and what damages, if any, should be awarded. May we hope to see fully explored the question of more power for the judges in libel cases? May we hope also to see the limiting of libel damages to amends for loss, so that there shall be no more exorbitant and extortionate awards inspired by considerations irrelevant to the question at issue? To be fair all round as far as possible those, it seems to me, are questions to which we should give our utmost thought.

"Kermodernism"?

One reader at least had sometimes to rub his eyes to make sure that what he was reading was an attack by Mr. Kermode on Mr. Connolly [Encounter, March] and not one of Mr. Connolly's celebrated parodies, this time of Mr. Kermode. Surely if one were to wonder how best to situate Mr. Kermode and his *Zeitgeist* in contemporary British culture, the best, if not the fairest, way, would be to contrast him, as a prototype, with Mr. Connolly as the prototype of the previous generation of critics: the *Wissenschaftler* and the connoisseur, the intelligentsia and the men of letters, the professional erudites and the well-read, the doctrinaires and the essayists. But that Mr. Kermode's article, caused perhaps by a subconscious urge to do his bit of ritual Encounter immolation, should give sometimes the impression of being a pastiche is almost the vengeance of the gods of the subconscious.

A high point in the article is reached when Mr. Kermode refuses to believe that Mr. Connolly really does not want to be a university luminary, does not want people to think that his essays are, in reality, "theses." "Yet, after all," exclaims Mr. Kermode, "he is a professional student and this is a thesis." Why? Mr. Kermode's senior common-room parochialism reminds me of that good Connecticut lady who dismissed her daughter's hesitation at inviting her New York Jewish doctor husband to join the family party at church on Sunday with an implacable: "Nonsense, dearie, *everybody*

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goes to church." A less happy moment occurs when Mr. Kermode, acting again as he so innocently admits as a "good supervisor," makes some severe remarks about Connolly's prose. Let's watch our step here. Even the computers might give disobliging answers if asked how many people buy books and magazines for the exclusive pleasure of reading Connolly's, Pritchett's, or Empson's prose, and how many....

But to come back to the main point. Everyone who happens to think of the integrations and harmonies of the various, not only two, cultures in the contemporary and future society naturally rejoices on seeing how many of the new critics come from the ranks of the university teachers and administrators. They combine, as Mr. Kermode puts it in a different context, "scholarship and high journalism" and occupy what more sociologically-minded students would describe as positions of control in the opinion-forming processes. This, in many ways, is the continuation of the old tradition of British, French, Italian and German universities which have always been a leading force in the national life and culture. This is also beginning to be true of the United States where the egg-heads or whiz-kids are still looked on with distrust by a pragmaticist society in which (to quote from Richard Hofstadter's unsurpassed work on the subject) "Anti-Intellectualism was not manifested for the first time during the 1950s... it is in fact older than our national identity and has a long historical background."

But this being said it is no secret to anyone that there are deep incompatibilities between those critics who teach students and those critics who write for readers. Montaigne's learning was not for teaching and neither for that matter was Dr. Johnson's. Young Coleridge lectured only for a couple years at Bristol. Sainte-Beuve fought all his life not to be dragged into the university, and T. S. Eliot, another critic, kept his distance too. Edmund Wilson, Jean Paulhan, Desmond McCarthy, J. B. Priestly, Harold Nicolson, Raymond Mortimer, V. S. Pritchett, Stephen Spender, Edward Sackville-West, Malcolm Muggeridge, and John Wain, observed the same rule. (The fact that many of the critics mentioned are also successful writers should not lead to the generalisation that it is those who are less confident in their creativity and talent who cling more anxiously to the administrative railings.)

Yet there are contrary examples of perhaps as many cases of contemporary conventional marriages between the two professions (Lionel Trilling, F. R. Leavis, William Empson, Roland Barthes) and this seems to be even more the case since the University explosion and the new articulation of the opinion-forming activities. But the saving grace, indeed the *sine qua non* of this is precisely not to make a confusion between the two attitudes: students should be taught, but not the public, and while teachers should observe methods, writers and critics should be free to ramble and idle. The various institutes, radio and television corporations, monthlies and Sunday magazines should not behave like institutionalised Universal Aunts and interpose themselves between those who write and those who read, those who paint, sculpt, act or film and those who look, those who play and sing and those who listen, and teach all of them how to do these things. The danger is that they could transform themselves from welcome intermediaries and interpreters into toll-houses with vested interests.

In this case Mr. Kermode's professorial deformation makes him scold Connolly for not producing what Mr. Kermode expected him to write, the perfect *Kulturgeschichte* of Modernism. But Mr. Connolly says in so many words, in his introduction that he was attempting no such thing. "Try as we would to be objective any such list... is personal as a cardiogram," and "the worst headache has been over writers whom I think ought to be in but whom I do not enjoy enough to feel prepared to take away with me into my solitary confinement." How, then, can one say that this is *doch* a thesis? It is a very personal list of works of a certain epoch and with a certain approach drawn up by a critic whose only criterion was taste and whose only dedication was always to the few with whom he could share his tastes. The list of a hundred key books drawn up with unimpeachable taste by Connolly is as far from a thesis as *The Unquiet Grave* was from a work of research and *Horizon* from a commercial monthly. Mr. Connolly wants to invite *some* people to read *some* books and not to teach *all* people what *all* books are about. It is as incongruous to reproach him for not being an efficient extra-mural pedagogue, as for not being an organiser of conducted tours and holiday camps in his favourite beauty spots.

Mr. Kermode, on the other hand, likes casebooks, encyclopaedias, and literary cybernetics. He tells us that stimulated by the works of the American Professors Ellmann, Feidelson, and Preminger, he is embarking now on the study of Paleo-modernism, Neo-modernism, and other Kermodernisms. Surely many people will be interested in these new research investigations. But there are also people who believe in the values of browsing. Should they not have the right to be left out of the compulsive pedagogic togetherness?

Ghita Ionescu

London

Of course I agree that we should make the jobs compatible without confounding them. There is pedantry to be eliminated on one side, inaccuracy and irresponsibility on the other. Mr. Ionescu's point seems to be that he likes facts better when they are wrongly stated, so long as they are expressed with impeccable taste. Incidentally, if "the only criterion" for the choices was Mr. Connolly's impeccable taste, why does his publisher announce that "Mr Connolly has taken as his criterion not personal preference, but the importance of each work in the setting of the movement itself"? And why the elaborate division into periods, the pseudo-academic historical abstractions? Of course I agree that so good a writer ought not to be producing sub-standard theses.

Frank Kermode

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